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**TOOLS TO MEASURE THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT /
TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

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ABSTRACT

The local governance is a complex reality that includes multiple factors. Measure is an exercise to be undertaken by government to know where they stand compared to other administrations and citizens. The components of local governance are transparency, public accountability and participatory democracy. Measuring each of these dimensions, which are subdivided into scopes, is the goal. It is proposed to use as simple indicators parameters, which allows only two answers, yes or not, or quantified to make them operational. These parameters are grouped into 3 groups, compulsory, relevant and recommended. Assigning a value to the parameter according to the group to which it belongs in case of a positive response, a total score is achieved. Having calculated the theoretical maximum possible and comparing the score may draw conclusions on the situation regarding local governance. As numerical data, we can calculate the degree of deviation from the target and assess progress.



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Index

Introduction

The problem to solve

Methodological description of indicators

Local governance

Public Accountability
Participatory democracy
Transparency

Conclusions

Bibliography



Introduction

The local government, the closest to citizens, needs tools that help generate more transparency and strengthen, if not regain, the trust of citizens they should have in public institutions.

We must move forward in the effort to make an Administration closer, more efficient and with effective responses to people, addressing, from new perspectives, all matters concerning citizenship, especially with a clearer management.

We need new methods of governance in local administrations, for example, aiming on innovative tools that allows progress in achieving a more participatory society, more involved with everything around them. Encouraging citizens for assisting and participating in the election of the actions developed in their municipality or in priorities when it comes to concrete spending.

This not only will get better results and higher efficiency projects, but also further strengthening of democracy, creating a more inclusive society. But, in turn, should affect strengthening confidence of people on administrations. Actions must be addressed, as strategy, providing clear and transparent accountability and control of public spending.

These are all aspects that make what we understand by local governance. Ultimately local governance is based on three pillars, transparency, public accountability and participatory democracy.

The problem to solve

Over recent years, the issues related to good governance and transparency in public administrations are having more importance, given the need to strengthen the credibility of public institutions at all levels, accentuated in a context of economic crisis like the present.

This need is reflected in the increase produced in the number of citizen initiatives that require different administrations greater transparency, while there is a growing awareness in demanding a more effective citizen participation in governance.

The question now is to think how to measure municipal management. What tools will have to achieve homogeneous data or comparable? If we are part of the institution, an arduous task of collecting information is required by different departments to get an idea of what we do, we have to order, tabulate, compare ... But what we measure?, records?, resolutions?, concerned citizens?, managed budget?, financial implementation rates?, levels of satisfaction of citizenship? ... What are the data that really allow us to say that we have a good local government? Manage many records are no guarantee that we act with criteria of good governance, that users are not satisfied or rights are violated.



In the opposite case, we can find a satisfied citizenship (with low demand levels) but with questionable results from the standpoint of local governance.

The European Union and other international organizations are using **indicators** as a recommended tool that allows comparison of homogeneous data.

There are different thematic compendiums of indicators. While they may be useful internationally, locally do not provide the key level information to determine how our government is a good government. These indicators must account all dimensions affecting the subject and should be achieved in a simple way, without complex calculations.

Therefore, the measurement is complex and key in the decision-making task.

But it is not only necessary to have reliable information about a key issue in order to get results, we need to analyze the data and draw relevant conclusions beyond the mere comparison with other actors. And this will be done in a relatively simple manner.

To choose appropriate indicators we now describe concepts and local governance indicators (what we intend to measure) and the dimension and scopes that compose it, and on which the development of these indicators is necessary.

Methodological description of indicators

Over recent years, there has been a considerable increase in the number of indicators that pursue the study or evaluation of what we mean by transparency of public institutions and good governance.

Many of these indices include statistical analysis aggregated from data sources at the state or regional level, largely focused on the study of developing countries. As a well-known examples of the most used indicators can highlight Perceptions Index Corruption (CPI) of Transparency International and Indicators of Global Governance (Worldwide Governance Indicators) developed by the World Bank. Using some of these indicators it is primarily aimed for national and international actors as well as international investors, or donors of development aid.

However, the use of these indicators presents some difficulties regarding to its applicability. First, the calculation is a complex task and not reproducible in a simple way, as for processing various and heterogeneous sources of information and intermediate results for the construction of the indicators. Some of them are not made public.

Moreover, some of the parameters that are taken into consideration in the development of these indicators come from surveys, which produces the results are subjective and less reliable in countries where fewer sources are extracted. This also means that the results are not comparable, since there are always based on the same set of sources of information.



As previously gone ahead, local governance is structured around three large blocks or principal dimensions, each one includes a number of scopes of good governance that should be evaluated.

The indicators to be part of our study on local governance should be grouped by thematic scopes and must collect through a series of tabs (one for each scope) including a set of parameters whose assessment may be performed in a simple manner through answers yes or no, so that evaluation can be conducted in an objective manner by the staff of the municipality or citizens or social groups interested or corporations.

Subsequently, these variables must be classified for the final analysis according to the degree of importance or use recommendations or by binding.

Importantly, the group selected indicators and parameters or through questions which are articulated, must be representative and valid for any municipality, regardless of size or specific characteristics.

We consider the set of indicators should adapt well to both mid-sized towns and large cities. For smaller municipalities, the selection of parameters should be adequate for municipalities of more than 5,000 inhabitants.

For smaller towns, with a population below 5,000 inhabitants, since they differ largely certain aspects of governance, as may be the organizational structure of local governments, much smaller, or the relationship with inhabitants, much closer to the intrinsic characteristics of these municipalities, the selection of parameters must be adapted to be useful to a smaller scale, making the assessment by considering only the parameters that are applicable in such municipalities.

Local governance

The terms governance, governance or good governance are being increasingly used to describe the execution of own tasks in the scope of its powers by any government.

Without going extensively in the etymological meaning of these concepts, it is noteworthy that although the term governance can be considered relatively recent creation, conceptually it is not. Governance as a concept, as stated in many texts published by the United Nations, means "the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not."

The term governance can be used in different contexts. In which we are concerned, we can speak of governance at different levels: international governance, national governance and local governance or good local governance.

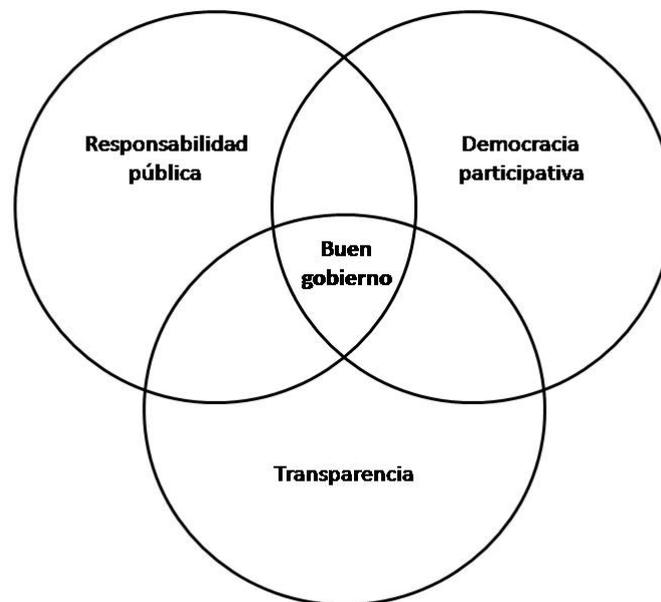
Speaking of governance from a global point of view, we would be referring to the set of rules governing the organization of societies worldwide. In the field of global governance must be addressed strategic issues of international relations as peace, defense and conflict resolution, economic governance and globalization or globalization, the management of the planet and environmental resources, and the own



practices of governance from the point of view of the functioning of institutions and international organizations.

From a point of view focused on a more local level, the main features that should provide a good government includes issues such as participation, transparency, accountability, equity, effectiveness, efficiency...

These characteristics of what we mean by good governance at the local level can be grouped into three large groups or basic dimensions of good governance: **public accountability, participatory democracy and transparency.**



1. Basic dimensions of local governance

Public accountability at the local level focuses on the structure and function of municipal governments, as well as strategic, financial or management of these capabilities. It designates the one hand, competition or ability to do something, but also to the subsequent duties at a certain management, in particular the duty of accountability.

By participatory democracy we mean the form of government in which public participation acquires a higher degree of importance in decision making and policy implementation at the local level, both as regards the degree of participation in the election local government representatives (representative democracy) and with regard to the degree of implementation of the various existing tools and mechanisms citizen participation and the promotion of new forms of democracy as the use of new technologies to improve the interaction between government and citizenship (digital democracy).



Finally, speaking of transparency must address two key issues, such as the right to public information and the fight against corruption. In this scope, it must ensure the possibility of access to existing municipal corporations information by any citizen, as part of the process of administrative transparency, and the control system of public responsibilities as a mechanism to monitor this basic condition for the proper functioning of a local administration.

Group of indicators

Public Accountability	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Organizational Structure2. Municipal strategic capacity3. Municipal financial capacity4. Managerial capacity of local services5. Human and productive capacities6. Sustainable local development
Participatory democracy	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Representative and digital democracy2. Participation government-citizenship3. Social participation
Transparency	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information on the corporation2. Relationship with citizens3. Economic transparency4. Procurement of services5. Urban transparency6. Transparency on sustainable development

2. Dimensions and scopes of local governance

The indicators used must take into account within each of the three dimensions of local governance, a particular scope that is being measured.



Dimension: **Public Responsibility**

Scope: **Organizational Structure**

An appropriate organizational structure is the basis of gear to ensure effective government that is able to respond optimally in their management tasks.

Each municipality has a specific reality that must be studied to draw as a local policy that allows the improvement of the management model anchored in public ethics and democratic quality.

This political project “tailored” will require an organizational scheme where the powers are clearly defined and are known internally to the smooth functioning of workers and publicly so that there is an involvement of all members of the local society.

It is therefore important to clearly establish the structure, duties and functions of the governing bodies and the development of operating protocols that contain the necessary operating rules.

This structure must be enriched with continuous communication mechanisms and coordination among all members to optimize resources and create synergies. The technologies from the information Y the communication, ICT, offer the possibility to help technically for getting better channels from information and communication.

An example indicator is:

- Does the mayor of the municipality full dedication?
- The Governing body of the local council is composed of at least 5 members?

Dimension: **Public Responsibility**

Scope: **Strategic Municipal Capacity**

The municipal strategic capability is essential for the local government to respond to the specific needs of their municipality through the clear, specific and ambitious definition of the status of that part and the objectives to be achieved.

It is therefore important political project clarity and efficiency that will strengthen political institutions and the rules of democratic government.

This quality is reflected in a timely and sufficient capacity thanks to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable organization to carry out its mission effectively answer.

However, a local government that highlights in this scope means that it is ambitious in its political project seeking not only to maintain their functions, but the goal of improvement towards an innovative and oriented at all times to improving the quality culture.



The development of information and communications technology allows the incorporation of tools for monitoring, modeling, collaboration, participation, coordination ... Its efficiency can enhance the municipal strategic capacity for example in anticipation of future scenarios according to various possible solutions or improved response time to a crisis.

Local government is closest to citizens and their management is directly impacting in quality of life. Therefore communication mechanisms must be developed that allow, in addition to access to information on the municipal strategy, collecting contributions that verify, complement and enhance this strategy.

An example indicator is:

- Is there a detailed diagnosis of the reality of the municipality and approved by the citizens discussion?
- Is there a municipal strategic plan?

Dimension: **Public Responsibility**

Scope: **Municipal financial capacity**

The assessment of the financial capacity of the municipality is a very important tool for the proper functioning of local government and municipal budget, as a quality budget optimally estimated earning incomes and expenditures for the best use of financial resources.

This way you can assign the right budget item to the realization of the internal activities of the municipality, the provision of services, public works...

Participatory budgets have advanced in democracy because they allow people to get involved in the use of financial resources in ways that increase the level of understanding among citizens of budgetary management and, ultimately, the local political culture is enriched.

The financial capacity is also affected by the role of citizens as taxpayers, seeing strengthened by a tax service and effective control mechanism on taxpayers.

An example indicator is:

- Is there an annual budget of revenues and expenditures approved by the governing body?
- It performs external audit of the financial statements?

Dimension: **Public Responsibility**

Scope **Management capacity of local services**



The mandatory powers assigned to municipal governments include caring of public roads, waste collection, security, urban traffic management, civil protection and fire discipline, markets and slaughterhouses, cemeteries...

There is also a set of skills that a municipality can assume by choice as the promotion of economic development, the creation of museums, the provision of certain social services, promotion of culture and sport and international cooperation.

The way these services are managed is central to the quality of life of its citizens so a close, practical and efficient criteria plotted a government capable of making better use of available resources.

Depending on the size of the municipalities, they can organize and provide the services directly or through autonomous bodies set up by the local government itself or the management is entrusted to a company owned by the municipality or is granted to a privately owned company.

In either case, the City Council must ensure the provision of the best services available to them, either through its own strategic and coordinated management or control system on the licensed requiring the proper performance of such work.

An example indicator is:

- Is there a charter of rights of users that regulate the services provided?
- Encourages interaction with citizens to implement the management of municipal services through new technologies?

Dimension: **Public Responsibility**

Scope: **Human and productive capacities**

Human development is one of the basic pillars that should anchor a society that seeks profitability of their potential.

In this sense, the local government must function as driver of human and productive capacities within the institution and the municipality in general. It is therefore advisable for the implementation of programs to create conditions that allow human development deepen the roots of key problems such as social exclusion, lack of education programs, allowing people access to better living conditions and develop their potential.

These policies and processes aimed at a major change that can ensure a more egalitarian model, fairer society and opportunities for their citizens.

The use of ICT in this scope substantially facilitates the development of human and productive capacities. The local administration must be one of the institutions that



promote their use through the implementation of training courses based on online educational platforms.

An example indicator is:

- Are there specific policies to address municipal activities preferentially to vulnerable groups?
- Is promoted technological innovation projects that improve and activate the local economy?

Dimension: **Public Responsibility**

Scope: **Sustainable Local Development**

In this context It's stressed the importance of implementing Local Agenda 21 pursuing the transition to local sustainability through a municipal structural plan that promotes sustainable development in economic, social and political decisions.

The origins of Local Agenda 21 is the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also called "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Arises from the "Global Program for Sustainable Development in the XXI century" - Program 21-, framed within said Earth Summit, which recognizes the role of local authorities in sustainable development [...] Local authorities dealing with the creation, operation and maintenance of economic, social and ecological infrastructure in character ... closest to the people, they play an important role in educating and mobilizing the public to promote sustainable development. (Agenda 21, Chap. 28).

The Aalborg Commitments are the main framework at European level in the process of implementing Agenda 21: forms of government, municipal management towards sustainability, natural common goods, responsible consumption and ways of life, planning and urban design, better mobility and traffic reduction, local action for health, living and sustainable local economy, equity and social justice, from local to global.

These ten Engagement issues are broken down into a set of general objectives that guide the development of more concrete action at local level.

An example indicator is:

- Is there a local Agenda 21 consolidated at municipal management?

Dimension: **Participatory Democracy**

Scope: **Representative democracy and digital democracy**



In European countries, the government of the towns is done through the municipalities, which function as a representative institution of the citizens who elect councilors by universal, direct and secret vote. Mayor election is done by the council.

The representation of this system can be seen as a threat when citizens do not exercise their right to vote for reasons such as lack of political education, the lack of policy options that would convince them to be represented distrust in the system.

Therefore, good governance should encourage their citizens to become involved in local politics, either directly and actively as members of political parties or indirectly through their voting so that, the representation is maximized and thereby the majority of citizens feel truly represented by the government team.

A progress on such participation must make a bid to regain mechanisms for meeting and deliberation as citizens' assemblies or councils, with the approach to participate in decisions of local councils.

In addition, the contributions also include the promotion of digital democracy, in the sense of promoting electronic ways to encourage public reflection and discussion through collaborative tools such as forums or wiki systems.

An example indicator is:

- Is there a stake of at least 50% of the population entitled to vote in local elections?
- Electoral party lists for the local elections are parity in gender?

Dimension: **Participatory Democracy**

Scope: **Government Participation – citizenship**

As it reflected in the toolkit for citizen participation and local action plans published by the Ministry of Environment of the Junta de Andalucía under the Environmental Sustainability Program City 21:

Citizen participation in public affairs is a fundamental right of citizenship. It is based on the foundations of the democratic concept, i.e. it is based on ideas, principles and values of democracy and participation, one way to achieve greater social motivation to contribute to building a better-informed society. Citizen participation is the first step to social action and achieving collective goals. "

That is why the creation of stable instruments of citizen participation leads to positive synergy that promotes the exchange of information between neighbors and institutions that represent it.

Moreover, as stated in the contributions to the Law on Citizenship of Andalusia, it should promote the use of ICT tools to encourage such participation, as the online collection of signatures, etc.



An example indicator is:

- Council has a specific body on citizen participation?
- Is there a deadline for reply to suggestions and complaints of citizens to one week?

Dimension: **Participatory Democracy**

Scope: **Social Participation**

Freedom of association is an essential democratic right recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights.

In addition, the Resolution A-2-196 / 1986 of the European Communities of March 13, on non-profit associations of the European Community considers that the amplitude of associations in a community develops the spirit of initiative, responsibility and solidarity of its members; are active centers of democratic life; effectively they serve the public interest, as a complement to the action of States; play an irreplaceable role of mediation, exchange and social balance.

In Spain there are nine types of partnerships at the division level as the domestic and conventional classification of the National Registry of Associations, these being: cultural and ideological; sporting, recreational and youth; economic and professional; families, consumers and seniors; concerning women; health, education and social action; education; and several neighbors.

In the first type, cultural and ideological, are included the associations dedicated to the sciences and humanities, collectors, media and entertainment, music, concerning the nature, faith-based, nationalist, related to military issues, etc...

It is therefore important that local governments provide to the simplification of administrative procedures registration processes and modification of partnerships, thus boosting the associational concerns and social participation.

An example indicator is:

- Is there a registry of associations at the municipal level updated and available to the public?
- Did the municipality provides space for offices of associations?

Dimension: **Transparency**

Scope: **Information on the corporation**



Ensuring access to information on the municipal corporation is one of the basic principles for greater transparency at the level of local administration.

Through this parameter set information is collected about how accessible it is for any citizen the basic institutional information on the organizational structure of the town.

The parameters refer to both the ability to access data on people in positions of responsibility of the council, or the same organizational structure, as well as municipal regulations or reference documents in local management.

In assessing the ability to access each of the parameters considered, regardless of what kind of access to such information (via publication in website, on-site, on request ...)

An example indicator is:

- Are biographical data of the mayor and councilors published?
- Are the agenda of mayors and councilors published?

Dimension: **Transparency**

Scope: **Relationship with citizens**

As a second scope of relevance to transparency at the municipal level, and we intend to evaluate the degree of transparency in the relationship between the administration and citizens.

While these parameters have some relation to the indicators that make up the dimension dedicated to participatory democracy, what is intended to evaluate now, is fundamentally the possibility of access to information on the various related institution-citizen interaction mechanisms.

Under this criterion, then are consider issues such as the access to public jobs or the rules of participation, among others.

As for the other scopes, it is desirable that the information published was accessible through different ways and not only by publishing on websites to prevent new cases of exclusion as technological discrimination.

An example indicator is:

- Is there a web in which relevant information is displayed to the public?
- Are there mechanisms for complaints and suggestions telematically and on-site?

Dimension: **Transparency**

Scope: **Economic Transparency**



This third scope is the dedicated to transparency and access to information as a basic practice of good local government, refers to the economic and financial transparency.

As for the above two scopes, the choice of parameters to be analyzed can be taken as a baseline the scopes defined for this purpose in the Transparency Index of the Municipalities (ITA) published by Transparency International - Spain.

Within these parameters, it should be included as the main parameters considered the most relevant in relation to the municipal budget capacity and the balance between revenue and expenditure.

An example indicator is:

- Annual accounts of the town are published?
- Accounts audit reports or bodies of external control are published?

Dimension: **Transparency**

Scope: **Procurement of services**

The government, to carry out the tasks related to matters over which they have jurisdiction, sometimes require the collaboration of private companies or individuals specialized in performing them.

Through these parameters, based on the methodology proposed by Transparency International Transparency Index of the Municipalities (ITA), it is intended to own municipal corporations are able to assess the transparency in the recruitment process works and services.

The basic criterion is to assess through this parameter selection the guarantee of public access to calls and procurement processes, regardless of the applicable law or the specific characteristics of each form, which may vary from one territory to other.

An example indicator is:

- The list and amount of transactions with the most important suppliers of the city council is published?
- Information on calls or open competitions for tenders and technical publications, economic and administrative specifications are published?

Dimension: **Transparency**

Scope: **Urbanistic Transparency**



The current configuration of the towns and cities are a direct consequence of the planning decisions that have been adopted over the years, both as regards the historical configuration as new buildings constructed in the recent past.

Therefore, the decisions taken in planning matters have a direct impact on issues that affect the lives of citizens, such as urban quality of cities, the existence of sufficient infrastructure and basic services and environmental preservation.

Therefore, the activities in urban planning and zoning must be made from the maximum transparency, with the greater citizen participation possible in processing and ensuring the accessibility to the planning documents once approved.

An example indicator is:

- Is the General Urban Plan or relevant planning regulations published?
- Is the General Urban Plan subjected to public exposure information as part of the process of dealing with them?

Dimension: **Transparency**

Scope: **Transparency in sustainable development**

As is the case with transparency in urban areas, to ensure transparency in relation to other matters having to do with the environmental impact caused by the development and exploitation of natural resources, or in a broader sense, to the three pillars basic sustainable development is a key aspect of good governance.

The right of access to environmental information is regulated by various national and international laws and has already been reflected in documents such as the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992). The guarantee of this access becomes a basic principle since the impact that actions occur in the environment directly affects the quality of life of citizens.

In this scope have no place parameters that refer not only to sustainability from an environmental point of view but also the social and economic sustainability, as these three types of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) that promote sustainable development together.

An example indicator is:

- Are data available on forest surfaces, agriculture or livestock in the municipality?
- Are published data about energy, water consumption and solid waste production?

Conclusions



The scale of dimensions and scopes given makes necessary to find a formula to be applied not only for indicators but also to draw clear conclusions beyond comparison with other local authorities which employ the same indicators.

Our proposal tool for measurement of local governance is to make a guide or compendium of indicators **easy to find**, containing a **detailed analysis by dimensions and scopes**, and **whose indicators are classified into 3 groups** to scale the results.

For easy identification, we mean that they are easy to find, they are published or you can reach them through a single phone call to the appropriate department.

What is intended is taking a practical approach to the performed document, so that for using it only will be necessary to know the real situation of governance processes in the municipality that is intended to evaluate. Thus, the guide can be used directly by the staff of local authorities, providing the municipalities of the possibility that they themselves carry out the assessment.

It is also about establishing a mechanism for simple, intuitive and easily reproducible assessment, with the aim that the process of self-evaluation can be conducted in different municipalities following the same methodology, or through external agents, without having assumed variation in results.

With regard to content, the guide will be articulated around three basic dimensions of governance: public accountability, participatory democracy and transparency. For each set of scopes we'll need simple interpretation parameters, whose value is either positive or negative depending on the situation in which the analyzed municipality is defined.

Based on this mechanism, defined as an evaluation tool the weighted sum of the parameters evaluated positively in the guide, which gives a clear and easily interpretable picture of the situation of governance processes at the local level, both generally as for each of the three dimensions that make up good governance.

The self-assessment tool allows not only determine the current position of the corporation, but also to identify shortcomings in the scope of good governance of them, based on the responses obtained in the preparation of the parameters.

Finally, it should include an analysis of possible results that can be obtained, so that, as part of the evaluation of the degree of development of local governance policies, is also possible to define more appropriate structures and procedures in order to better governance at the municipal level.

Once defined the parameters or criteria that make up each level, it is proposed to establish a mechanism to self-assess the results.

To do so, once completed sheets with response parameters **Yes or No**, the following self-assessment methodology is proposed:

- Assign each answer a numerical value of 1 (if yes) or 0 (in case of refusal).



- Weigh each parameter depending on the degree of relevance. Each indicator should be classified according to three categories: Mandatory, Relevant and Recommended.

Those parameters considered mandatory, are important for themselves or for their links with the requirements stipulated in the various existing laws, compliance is key to running a good local government.

Those parameters that have a very high degree of importance are considered relevant, but do not have a condition marked as mandatory for the operation of good government.

Parameters considered recommended are those that while they are desirable from the standpoint of better local governance, make it mandatory is overly restrictive or are not easily applicable to all types of municipalities.

- Weigh each answer according to their degree of relevance, assigning a numerical value (weight) to each parameter according to the following table:

Degree of relevance	Numerical value (weight)
Mandatory	5
Relevant	3
Recommended	1

- Finally, establish a final score by comparing the values obtained with the theoretical maximum achievable. For the general case, if the total set of parameters making up the guide, was of 148 questions, equivalence with a weighted sum equal to 482 (theoretical maximum). If the value obtained is divided after completing the chips and weigh each of the affirmative responses (earned value) from this constant value, a numerical score between 0 and 1, which can be interpreted as follows you are obtained:

$$Governance_index = \frac{obtained_value}{theoretical_max}$$

Numerical result	Assessment
0.8 to 1	Suitable
0,5 - 0,8	Acceptable
0,3 - 0,5	Inadequate
0 to 0.3	Critical

This self-assessment tool also allows partial results for each of the three dimensions that make up good governance indices, using the same methodology.

In short, this system will allow us to:



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- Evaluate our institution and our state without making comparisons with others.
- Our own citizens and stakeholders can assess a local government.
- Evaluate changes so you can see the evolution in the situation of your local governance.
- Identify weaknesses of the administration to reach a better position.



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