



Distr.
LIMITED
LC/CEA.11/10
17 November 2021
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH
21-00819

Eleventh meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas
of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Virtual meeting, November 23–25, 2021

GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE WORKING GROUPS OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS



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INTRODUCTION

This document sets forth the guidelines for the formation and functioning of the working groups of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It is an update of the *Operational guidelines for the working groups*,¹ incorporating the suggestions made by member States at the tenth meeting of the Conference (Santiago, 2019).

The working groups were established at the third meeting of the Conference (Santiago, 2005) as a cooperation mechanism for countries, in fulfilment the mandate of the Conference: to promote the development and improvement of national statistics and work to ensure that they are comparable, and to promote international, regional and bilateral cooperation among national statistical offices and international and regional agencies.² Since then, the working groups have grown in number and thematic scope, and the criteria for their formation and functioning have been gradually adjusted in line with proposals from member countries.

At the tenth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, it was established that all the working groups would focus on the preparation of a clearly defined final output, to be completed within a two-year period,³ on themes relevant to statistical development in the region. The Conference also asked that the working groups of the Statistical Conference of the Americas mainstream the gender perspective into their work.

Beginning in the biennium 2020–2021, the creation of working groups has been a phased process. First, the member countries of the Conference submit proposals on outputs that contribute to the statistical development of Latin America and the Caribbean. The proposals are then submitted to member countries for consultation on the relevance of the outputs and interest in participating in drafting them. Based on this information, the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference selects the proposed outputs that will be submitted for adoption by the Conference and subsequently carried out by an ad hoc working group.

This document formalizes the procedure for the formation and functioning of the working groups that was used in the previous biennium and describes the process for submitting new proposals in upcoming bienniums.

¹ ECLAC, *Operational guidelines for the working groups* (LC/L.4156), Santiago, 2016.

² ECLAC, *Establishment of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean* (United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/7) (LC/L.1475(CEA.2001/5)), Santiago, 2001.

³ See paragraph 14 resolution of resolution 11(X) [online] <https://cea.cepal.org/10/sites/cea10/files/cea.10-resolution.pdf>.

I. FORMATION AND FUNCTIONING OF WORKING GROUPS

A. PURPOSE OF THE WORKING GROUPS⁴

The working groups are organizational arrangements that allow member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC to address jointly a problem or issue concerning the objectives of the Strategic Plan, which are to strengthen the organization and management practices of the national statistical offices and the integration and coordination of national statistical systems; to foster the development of technical and methodological capacities in order to generate high-quality statistical information; and to foster coordination and cooperation between the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas and international organizations.

Working groups should focus on the preparation of a single output and their programme of activities must be in line with the availability of human resources in the member countries and the financing to meet the proposed targets. Any member country of the Conference that so wishes may join a working group, with the understanding that this will require a commitment from national statistical offices to include the time that experts dedicate to the working group in their regular programme of work.

B. GROUP MEMBERSHIP

1. Coordinator or coordinators

Each working group shall have a coordinating country, or, where desirable, two countries serving as joint coordinators, whose functions shall be:

- To coordinate the work of the group to ensure that its programme of activities is carried out.
- To coordinate support for programme implementation with the technical secretariat.
- To prepare the working group's progress reports.
- To communicate regularly with the Executive Committee through such mechanisms as the Committee may determine.
- To maintain regular contact with the Knowledge Transfer Network.

2. Members

Working groups shall be composed of national statistical offices of the member countries of the Statistical Conference and of national or international agencies with relevant expertise, which will undertake to:

- Designate a focal point to participate in the activities of the working group.
- Carry out assigned tasks for the implementation of the plan of activities.
- Support the group coordinator in organizing the requisite activities.

⁴ Sections A through D are based on the provisions of resolution 11(X) of 2019 [online] <https://cea.cepal.org/10/sites/cea10/files/cea.10-resolution.pdf>.

3. Technical secretariat

Each working group will have a technical secretariat, with ECLAC serving in that capacity. Where required, the role of technical secretariat may be shared with a specialized international agency. The functions of the secretariat shall be to:

- Provide specialized technical support to the working group in the respective thematic area.
- Give guidance in producing the outputs agreed in the programme of work.
- Facilitate coordination between the working group and international agencies and the search for funding when required.

C. DURATION OF THE WORKING GROUPS

The working groups will remain in existence for a period of two years, during which time they must develop and finalize the agreed outputs. To this end, they can carry out various data-collection activities (preparation of questionnaires or holding regional consultations) and virtual or face-to-face meetings to facilitate joint work. These tasks are instrumental to the achievement of the working groups' objectives and are not an end in themselves.

Each working group is expected to present the final output at the meeting of the Conference following the meeting at which it was established. Should more time be required to prepare the agreed output, the Executive Committee of the Conference will exceptionally consider extending the duration of the working group for an additional period of time.

D. ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee, with support from the secretariat of the Conference, is responsible for monitoring the operations of the working groups and for providing support for their activities. Under the leadership and coordination of the Chair of the Executive Committee, the Committee will promote discussion forums to identify and build synergies between groups, and collaboration between their members.

Prior to each meeting of the Conference, the Executive Committee shall assess the background information on the proposals for the creation of working groups and shall select those to be submitted to the Conference for adoption.

E. IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF PROGRAMMES OF WORK

In their two-year term, working groups shall undertake to submit progress reports on activities and parts of the agreed outputs which will allow for follow-up of advancement towards the final product.

1. Working group outputs

The outputs of the working groups are expected to have a regional impact and to be useful beyond the duration of the groups. Their results are intended to benefit the region as a whole, not just the countries actively participating in them.

(a) Types of outputs

Working groups can produce different types of outputs:

- Documents: diagnostic or an in-depth review of a specific topic, setting or adaptation of standards, classifications and methodologies, manuals, recommendations, compilations and systematizations of experiences and good practices.
- Methodological tools: databases, quality assessment tools, standardized questionnaires, methodological sheets, among others.
- Virtual resources: computer platforms for accessing shared resources or for dissemination.

When the documents or tools prepared by the working groups contain recommendations or standards to be applied regionally, they must be submitted to the Conference for adoption.⁵ Such outputs must meet additional requirements, which are set forth in paragraph 3 (“Partial submissions and final output”).

(b) Gender mainstreaming

At the tenth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, the countries of the region asked that the working groups of the Statistical Conference of the Americas mainstream the gender perspective into their work.⁶ To this end, a number of criteria to be adopted by working groups were set forth in the document *Guidelines for gender mainstreaming in the working groups of the Statistical Conference of the Americas*.⁷ To monitor this process, each output submitted by the working groups will be assessed and then returned with recommendations regarding the appropriate mainstreaming of gender.

2. Progress reports

The progress reports submitted by the working groups indicate the degree of completion of each of the activities programmed for the biennium. They are intended to inform the Conference on the progress of the programme and are presented as working documents for meetings of the Executive Committee. Prior to the meetings of the Executive Committee, ECLAC will request progress reports, which must be completed in the following format:

No.	Activity	Progress (%)	Remarks
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⁵ Documents adopted by the Conference in recent years include the Code of Good Practice in Statistics for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Classification of Time-Use Activities for Latin America and the Caribbean (CAUTAL) and the Generic Law on Official Statistics for Latin America.

⁶ See paragraph 26 of resolution 11(X) [online] <https://cea.cepal.org/10/sites/cea10/files/cea.10-resolution.pdf>.

⁷ LC/CEA.11/9.

Actions carried out to mainstream gender must be included in the activities of the group.

3. Partial submissions and final output

The working groups must deliver two partial submissions in addition to the final output. These submissions correspond to the various stages of the drafting process and shall occur, respectively, at the two meetings of the Executive Committee and the meeting of the Statistical Conference held in each biennium. The required progress for each submission may vary depending on whether the output is a document, a methodological tool or a virtual resource.

(a) First partial submission

For documents, the first submission will consist of an annotated index of the context that will be developed over the two years. It should include a provisional title and a detailed description of the content of each chapter or section. It is intended as an outline of the theme to be addressed by the working group, thereby optimizing resources and efforts. This index serves as a road map for the preparation of the final document, which may therefore undergo changes during the process. This document will not be edited or translated by ECLAC.

For methodological tools and virtual resources, the first submission will consist of a report describing the output being prepared. It should include elements such as the objective, thematic area, content covered, and methodologies and statistics to be used, among others

In both cases, the deadline for submission is the first meeting of the Executive Committee following the meeting of the Conference at which the working groups were established.

(b) Second partial submission

For documents, the second submission will be a draft of the final document. It should include the final index and is expected to reflect significant progress regarding the total planned content (at least 60% complete), to ensure its timely conclusion.

For methodological tools and virtual resources, this submission will consist of a report or presentation showing the progress in the preparation of the output. Design elements should therefore be at an advanced stage and the first functional tests of the instrument should have been carried out.

In both cases, the deadline for submission is the second meeting of the Executive Committee following the meeting of the Conference at which the working groups were established.

(c) Final submission

The final submission refers to the delivery of the final version of the agreed output, be it a document, a methodological tool or a virtual resource. Working groups are expected to develop their programmes of activities in a timely manner, on the basis of the progress made during the biennium, so as to complete the final output as stipulated.

The final versions of the outputs are to be submitted three weeks before the meeting of the Conference, with the exception of products submitted for adoption by the Conference. Documents not submitted for adoption by the Conference will not be edited or translated by ECLAC and will be disseminated through the Knowledge Transmission Network.

The outputs submitted for adoption by the Conference consist of documents (guides or manuals) or tools (questionnaires or classifiers) that propose harmonized methodologies or instruments for the production, collection and dissemination of official statistics on a particular subject, which are applicable at the regional level and serve as a lasting methodological reference. The secretariat shall inform the working groups of the maximum length of these documents at the beginning of each biennium.

In this case, the final submission must be delivered at least three months before the meeting of the Statistical Conference, to ensure compliance with the following: (i) review and endorsement by all national statistical offices in the region; (ii) incorporation by working group of the comments received; and (iii) editing and translation by ECLAC. Upon completion of this process, the outputs are submitted as working documents for adoption by the Conference.

II. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSED OUTPUTS

At the end of each biennium, the member countries of the Conference may present one or more proposals for the preparation of a specific output in the following biennium, in line with the relevant guidelines and consistent with statistical issues of regional relevance.

A. FORMAT FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSED OUTPUTS

Proposals must be submitted in the following format, with each field duly filled in.

1. **Name:** Give a clear and concise title of the proposed output.
2. **Institution:** Name and country of the institution submitting the proposal.
3. **Background:** describe the diagnosis or current status of the problem on which the output is based and which provides the grounds for its implementation. This section should outline the rationale for the preparation of the output and the context in which it is framed.
4. **General objective:** state in one sentence the purpose to be served by the preparation of this output.
5. **Specific objectives:** indicate in three or four points the partial objectives which, together, will help to achieve the general objective. The specific objectives should narrow down and frame the general objective, and serve to determine the concrete actions or activities to be carried out.
6. **Expected impact:** describe the expected medium- and long-term effects that would stem from this output.
7. **Gender mainstreaming:** specify how the output contributes to gender equality or gender mainstreaming in the field of statistics.

8. **Regional standard adopted by the Conference:** indicate whether the output is a regional standard to be adopted by the Statistical Conference of the Americas. These may be documents (e.g. guides or manuals) or tools (e.g. questionnaires or classifiers) that propose harmonized methodologies or instruments for the production, collection and dissemination of official statistics on a particular subject, which are applicable at the regional level and serve as a lasting methodological reference.
9. **Budget and financing sources:** the outputs are expected to be produced mainly by the human resources of the national statistical institutions participating in the working group. The budget required to prepare the output must be indicated, as well as whether any additional sources of financing are expected.
10. **Programme of activities:** provide a workplan with a minimum of five and a maximum of ten activities needed to produce the product, in the following format:

Workplan			
Activity	Start date	End date	Remarks

B. CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF PROPOSED OUTPUTS

1. Consideration

The Executive Committee shall consider the proposed outputs in accordance with the guidelines herein described. Proposals that meet the stated requirements will be forwarded to the countries of the region for consultation on the outputs in which they would be most interested and willing to participate. Based on that feedback, and other criteria considered by the Executive Committee, the Committee will select the outputs to be submitted for adoption by the Conference.

2. Adoption

At each meeting of the Conference, those proposals that have been previously reviewed and accepted by the Executive Committee will be submitted for adoption. At these meetings, working groups tasked with preparing the outputs prioritized at the regional level will be formed and their member countries confirmed.