

GOVERNANCE FOR STRATEGIC PURCHASING:

AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE A COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

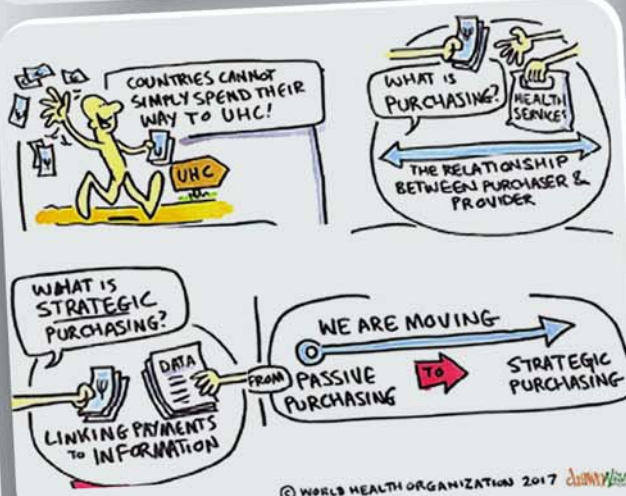


STRATEGIC PURCHASING

Governance

Payment methods

Benefits



Information management



World Health
Organization

HEALTH FINANCING GUIDANCE NO. 6

**GOVERNANCE FOR STRATEGIC
PURCHASING:
AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK TO
GUIDE A COUNTRY ASSESSMENT**



**World Health
Organization**

**Governance for strategic purchasing: an analytical framework to guide a country assessment
(Health Financing Guidance, No. 6)**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Purpose and overview	7
1.2 Definition of key concepts	8
1.3 Method of assessment	9
2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK	11
2.1 The general governance context determines the scope of governance for strategic purchasing	11
2.2 Governance of the health care purchasing system for coordination, alignment and regulation	11
2.3 Governance of a purchasing agency to make it operate strategically	18
2.4 Factors conducive to effective governance for strategic purchasing	28
3. GOVERNANCE FOR STRATEGIC PURCHASING: COUNTRY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK	30
Step 1. Analysis of the general governance context and the health financing system	30
Step 2. Assessment of the governance of the health care purchasing system	33
Step 3. Assessment of the governance of a purchasing agency	35
Step 4. Assessment of factors conducive to effective governance of strategic purchasing	38
Step 5. Summary of key strengths and challenges and development of options and recommendations	40
REFERENCES	41
ANNEX 1. EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF PURCHASING-RELATED REFORMS	43

TABLE OF TABLES, FIGURES AND BOXES

Table 1. Types of organization of the health care purchasing system and opportunities and challenges for strategic purchasing	14
Table 2. Governance requirements for a purchasing agency	24
Table 3. Key (socio-)economic, health and health expenditure indicators	31
Table 4. Mapping of main purchasers and providers	32
Table 5. Assessment of the structure of the health care purchasing system and opportunities and challenges for strategic purchasing	33
Table 6. Assessment of governance tasks in relation to the health care purchasing system	34
Table 7. Assessment of governance aspects at purchaser level	35
Table 8. Division of decision-making authority for purchasing aspects	37
Fig. 1. Different degrees of purchaser autonomy	20
Box 1. Core governance tasks related to the overall health care purchasing system	12
Box 2. Potential risks and effects of multiple health care purchasers	16
Box 3. Governance requirements for strategic purchasing at the agency level	18

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document sets out an analytical framework for assessing a country's governance arrangements for the purchasing function. The purpose of such an assessment is to assist policy-makers and policy advisors in determining whether the existing governance arrangements for the purchasing function are conducive to more strategic purchasing. It can identify gaps in governance arrangements that prevent more strategic purchasing and options for overcoming those gaps.

The analytical framework takes a comprehensive approach to governance. It is designed for assessing the governance of both the health care purchasing system and of an individual purchasing agency, thereby focusing on mandatory health insurance and government health purchasing schemes.

Section 1 of the document provides definitions of strategic purchasing and governance and describes the methods of the assessment. Governance is an overarching health systems function and is about “ensuring strategic policy frameworks exist and are combined with effective oversight, coalition-building, regulation, attention to system-design and accountability”. It equally applies to specific health system components as well as aspects of health financing. Effective governance arrangements constitute a critical enabler for strategic purchasing, i.e. making purchasing more strategic requires strong coordination of all key actors, clear decision-making rules and appropriate regulations.

Section 2 describes the concepts and outlines the four areas to be assessed in relation to the governance of the purchasing function. These are listed in the box below.

Assessment areas:

1. The broader, political and general governance context and overview of the health financing system
2. Governance of the health care purchasing system
3. Governance of an individual purchaser
4. Conducive factors for effective governance for strategic purchasing

=> Summary assessment of governance for strategic purchasing and development of recommendations

In most countries, the health financing system consists of more than one healthcare purchaser that fund and purchase health services. By “governance of the health care purchasing system”, we mean active management by policy-makers and other governance actors (or stewards) of the roles

and relations between different health purchasers and between the governance actors and purchasers. Core governance tasks related to the healthcare purchasing system include setting directions, coordination and alignment, and the setting of legal provisions and regulations.

There are a number of governance requirements that are relevant at the level of a purchasing agency. These are specifically geared to direct a purchaser to operate strategically, i.e. to use levers to create an environment that enhances efficiency and quality in health care service

delivery by providers. The framework outlines indications for effective governance arrangements at the agency level and provides examples of potential deficits in these nine governance arrangements and their effects. These nine governance requirements are listed below.

1. Clear and consistent decision-making rules related to purchasing for Ministry of Health, oversight body and purchaser
2. Public interest mandate and clear objectives to give the purchaser strategic direction and to act strategically
3. Sufficient autonomy and authority for the purchaser to act strategically to meet objectives, commensurate with capacity
4. Effective oversight
5. Inclusive and meaningful stakeholder participation
6. Coherent multiple accountability lines supporting transparency
7. Firm and credible budget constraint
8. Selection of head of purchasing agency based on appropriate skills and performance incentives to guide operations
9. Compliance rules relating to the management and control of funds by the purchaser.

The framework also identifies four factors conducive to effective governance for strategic purchasing. These relate to the realm of management of both the purchasing actors and governance actors. These factors are critical for the governance of the health care purchasing system and for the agency level and include: 1) good data to inform strategic planning and operations; 2) effective information management system to handle governance and purchasing tasks; 3) managerial capacity and leadership of governance and purchasing actors; and 4) effective relations among governance actors, purchasing agencies and other stakeholders.

Section 3 presents the respective assessment steps for the four areas, which are to be recapped in a summary assessment at the end. Each step provides a set of guiding questions, including tables to organize the collection of information. The guiding questions facilitate the country assessment and help to identify key strengths and challenges. On this basis specific recommendations including short- and long-term actions can be developed to contribute to improved governance for strategic purchasing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Governance is an overarching health systems function for ensuring that “strategic policy frameworks exist and are combined with effective oversight, coalition-building, regulation, attention to system-design and accountability” (1). It applies equally to specific health system components and to aspects of health financing. Governance of the purchasing of health services has, however, received little attention in either research or policy practice, despite its importance (2). Effective governance arrangements are a critical enabler of strategic purchasing, as making purchasing more strategic requires strong coordination of all key actors, clear rules for decision-making and appropriate regulations. Strategic purchasing, in turn, is vital for progress towards universal health coverage

(3). Strategic purchasing transforms budgets and funds into benefits, with the aim of distributing resources more equitably and realizing gains in efficiency. This frees resources that can be used to extend coverage. Strategic purchasing can also send signals to health providers to improve the quality of health services (4). However, weak or absent governance arrangements provide an inadequate institutional and regulatory context, which makes it difficult to take decisions for moving towards strategic purchasing and implementing those decisions. In many countries, the governance arrangements in health systems, particularly with respect to purchasing, function poorly and are under-developed or even absent. Another challenge is insufficient capacity for governance (5).

1.1 PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

This document sets out an analytical framework for assessing a country’s governance arrangements for the

The analytical framework serves to guide the assessment of governance arrangements for the purchasing

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