

# TUTORIAL on FISCAL TRANSPARENCY PORTALS

A USER-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

## MODULE 8

Monitoring and evaluation  
to improve



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## Tutorial on Fiscal Transparency Portals

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What can be measured can be improved.

The concepts of monitoring and evaluation share a dual control function. The difference between the two is that **monitoring** focuses on operational factors such as activities, resources, deadlines and even recent results in order to make timely modifications and corrections, while **evaluation** is based on the sphere of analysis with regard to achieving higher and broader objectives.

### Monitoring and evaluation as control elements

#### Monitoring

- Addresses aspects of a more operative nature (activities, resources, deadlines, costs and recent results in the form of products and services).
- Is done during the execution of a project.
- Is continuous and permanent.
- Is a systematic procedure to check the efficiency and effectiveness of execution.
- Seeks to identify achievements and weaknesses so as to implement corrective measures.
- Allows for performance improvement to ensure a project's success.

#### Evaluation

- Focuses on the achievement of results.
- Is done in a project's design, execution or maturation phase.
- Is carried out in established periods or segments.
- Allows conclusions to be drawn on a larger scale than monitoring--at the level of a public policy, for example.

Source: Diplomado PbR, SHCP Mexico 2017

Monitoring and evaluation should not be confused with fiscalization. They should be thought of as allied tools that allow the detection of areas of opportunity for improvement. With this in mind, these processes, and all processes for that matter, should be designed and constituted in a way that facilitates decision making.

Monitoring is carried out on two levels, one being that undertaken in respect of the achievement of objectives and the other on functional/operative areas. The first level refers to the monitoring of established indicators to measure immediate, intermediate and general objectives (results), which should be determined in the planning stage; while the second one refers to the operational monitoring of a site. It is important to note that, due to a portal project's characteristics, both levels will be closely interrelated.

Evaluation, on the other hand, focuses on different conceptual aspects of a project, such as its operation or impact. Different methodologies can be used for these, which are broadly mentioned later in this module.

## 8.1 Monitoring

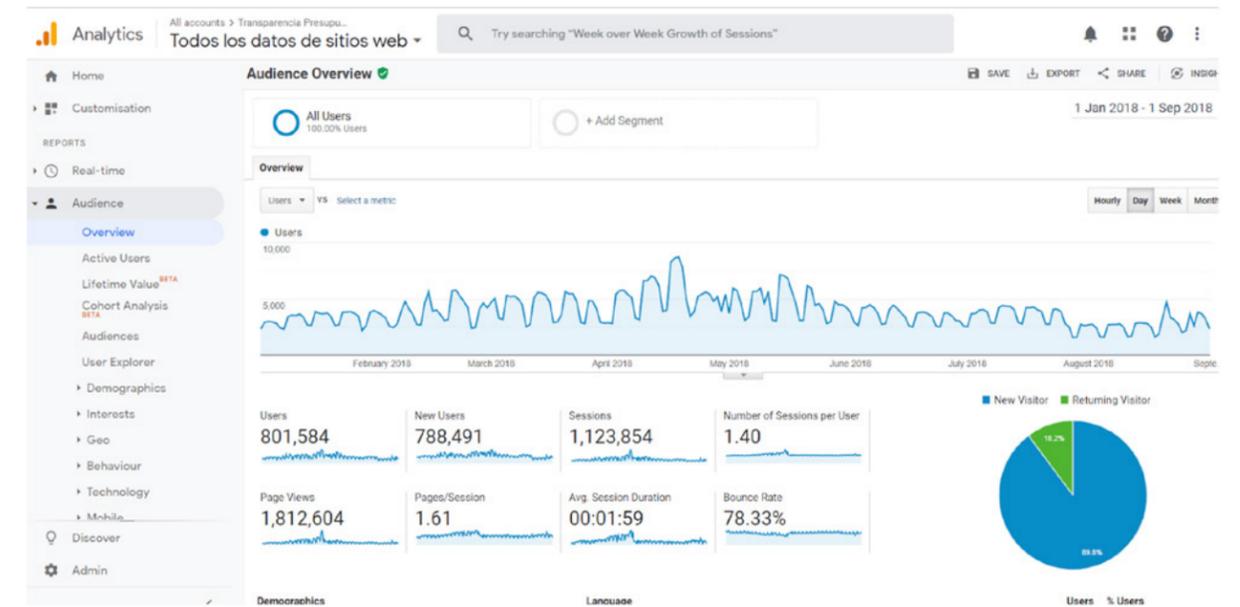
### 8.1.1 Monitoring objectives based on indicators

In this section, we revisit topics from the third module, that highlight the importance of having clear objectives in a project, as well as the causal relation of elements, with quantitative, and in some cases, qualitative measurements.

The previous content on defining indicators won't be repeated in this module. As it relates to monitoring, it is however necessary to ensure that established indicators include measurement frequencies in order to enable timely decision making. As such, it is advisable that activity or input indicators have a monthly or quarterly measurement frequency, while product or output indicators have a lower frequency.

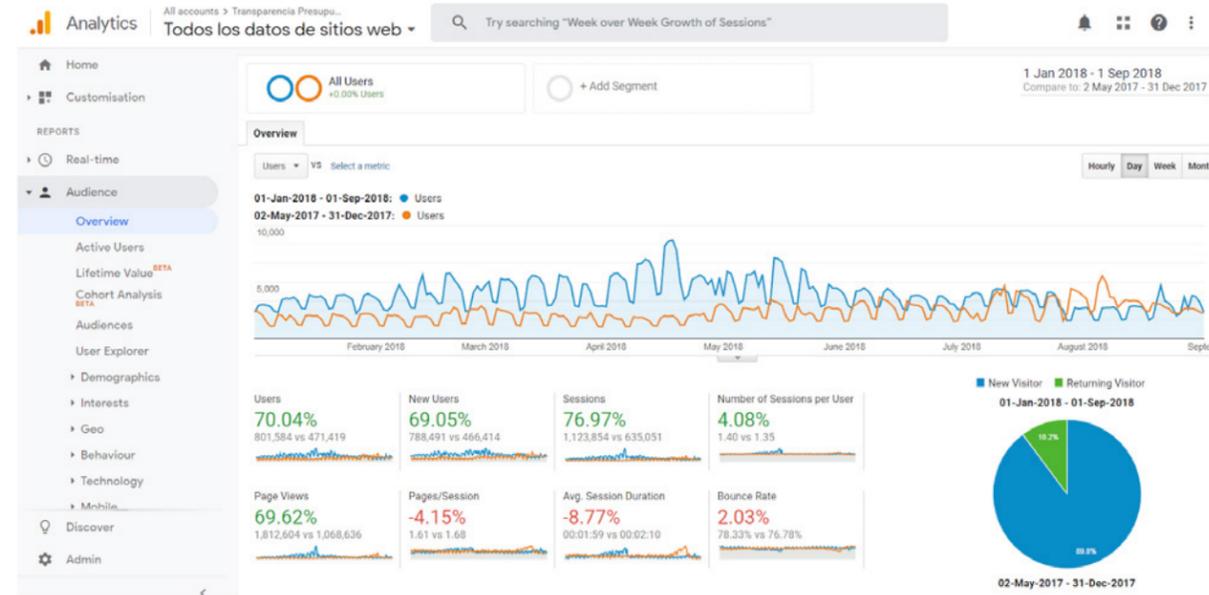
### 8.1.2 Functional/operational monitoring

Although, as previously indicated, a site's number of users does not reflect its impact, the monitoring of how users interact with it provides an essential piece of information for the improvement process. The most commonly used tool for this is Google Analytics, a web analytics tool that offers grouped information on a site's traffic according to the audience, acquisition, behavior and conversions which occur on it.

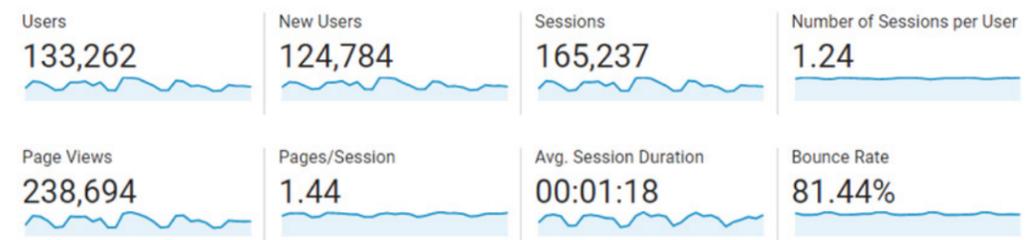


Google's training site provides details of how to install and use Google Analytics. However, since it is a very vast tool, this tutorial shares some recommendations on analytics that can be useful.

- **Range of dates** - When measuring a website's performance, it is useful to break information down by date ranges or fixed periods of time. Using Google Analytics, one can select the range or period of time to be analyzed, as well as make comparisons between one set of results and another from a previous period. That is, comparisons can be made using the overlapping graphs of different months or weeks, as seen in the following image.



- **Number of visits** - One of the main uses of Google Analytics is to see how many visits a portal or platform has received. From these visits, we can extract various kinds of data, including *new visitors* and *page views*. "New visitors" is a metric that refers to all the people who have visited a portal for the first time. Similarly, "page views" is a metric that reflects the number of times a given page has been opened. This data is required to measure the general use of the site.



- **Average time** - This metric indicates the time a user has spent navigating through a specific page of a portal. It is relatively safe to assume that the longer this time is, the more interest there is in the content is. If the time that target users spend on a page is relatively short, it might suggest that the content it offers does not interest them.

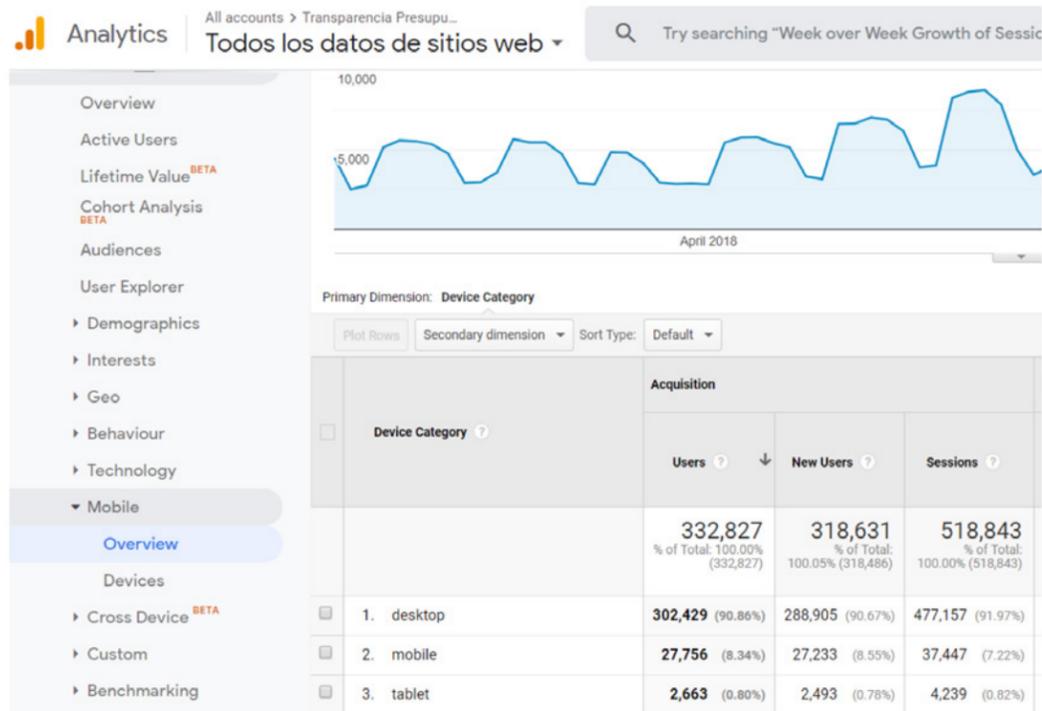
Although it's possible to find this metric applied to the general site in the initial analytics panel, as can be seen in the following image, it is comparatively more useful to assess the average time users spend browsing compared by site section. This will prove very valuable in better understanding users' interest in different topics.



To consult the breakdown of average time spent by site section, navigate through Google Analytics by selecting "Behavior" > "Site Content" > "All Pages". Once there, the information is displayed as seen below:

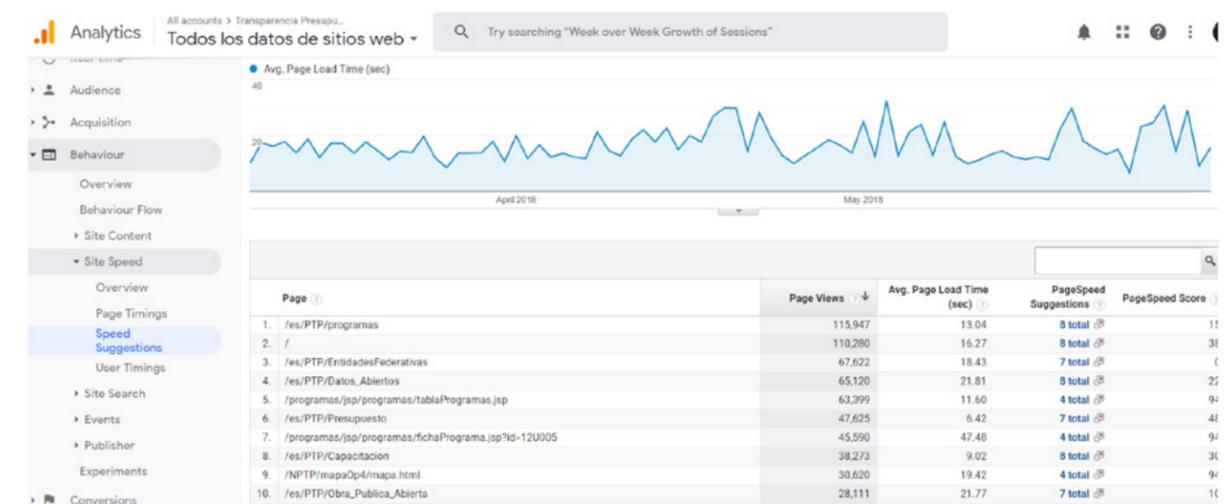
Page Title	Page Views	Unique Page Views	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit	Page Value
	919,647	707,727	00:03:33	518,712	73.39%	56.40%	<US\$0.01
1. Transparencia Presupuestaria   Programas	116,676	90,929	00:04:18	75,692	82.37%	66.15%	<US\$0.01
2. Transparencia Presupuestaria   Inicio	95,431	85,670	00:02:00	80,068	72.68%	65.67%	<US\$0.01
3. ...Ficha de Programa	92,246	77,996	00:04:47	57,388	91.61%	71.25%	US\$0.00
4. Transparencia Presupuestaria   Entidades Federativas	68,886	59,178	00:04:52	48,642	90.32%	76.50%	<US\$0.01
5. Transparencia Presupuestaria   Datos Abiertos	65,992	42,793	00:04:46	25,588	56.85%	47.53%	<US\$0.01
6. Programas	63,400	39,523	00:05:23	38,841	53.53%	47.08%	US\$0.00
7. Transparencia Presupuestaria   Presupuesto	48,557	26,822	00:01:31	7,737	19.30%	15.73%	<US\$0.01
8. Transparencia Presupuestaria   Capacitacion	38,637	30,908	00:05:07	29,700	78.26%	74.54%	<US\$0.01
9. Test Mapa 2	30,627	22,576	00:06:33	22,523	75.75%	71.39%	US\$0.00
10. Transparencia Presupuestaria   Obra Publica Abierta	29,454	22,815	00:00:11	15,565	10.09%	9.83%	<US\$0.01

- **Devices** - As mentioned in the previous module, it is possible to tell which types of devices visitors use to access a portal (desktop computer, tablet, mobile phone, etc.). With this information, the web design can be modified as required to guarantee navigation usability (responsiveness). For example, in the following image it can be seen that a large majority of users access this site through a desktop computer.



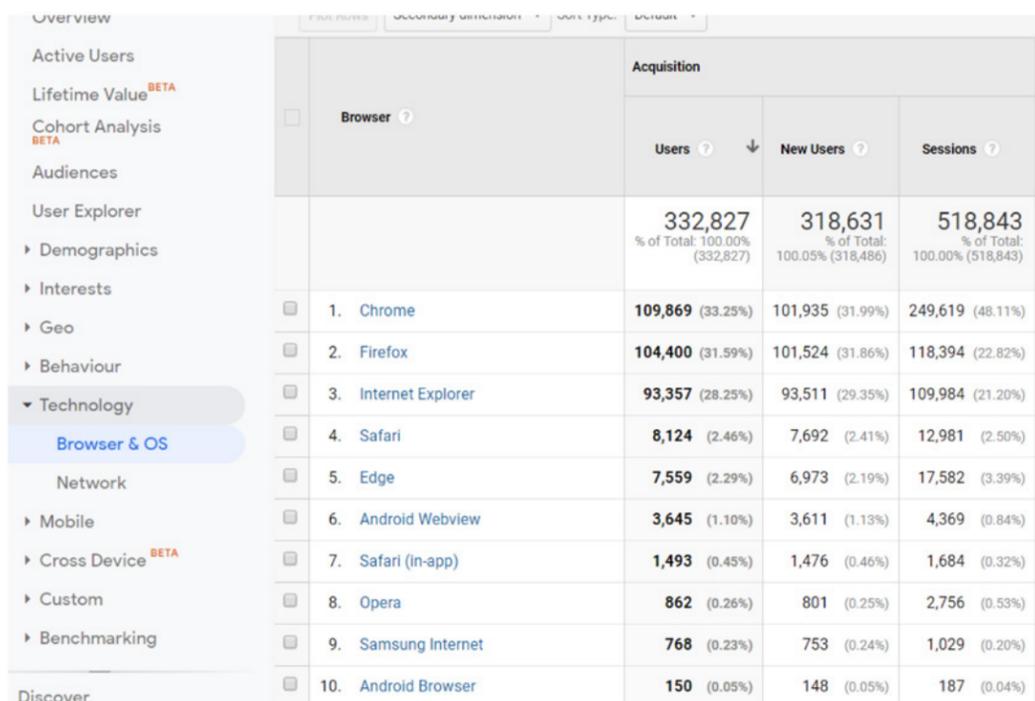
• **Site speed** - The loading time of each page provides very valuable data, since if the portal or platform is slow, or takes a long time to load its contents, the user will likely tire of waiting and leave the portal without having had any kind of interaction. Again, this data should be viewed and interpreted separately by section or platform, with the understanding that the sources of information and the type of connection can be different.

Beyond these, Google Analytics provides a series of suggestions for improving site performance, which will be useful when it comes to making decisions on portal improvement.



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• **Browser** - It may seem like irrelevant data. However, information on browser use is helpful when taking development decisions given that some visualizations or tools cannot be visualized correctly on all web browsers.



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**Tip:** It is advisable to periodically go beyond Google Analytics and review your site for possible broken links. Broken links generate the appearance of a lack of maintenance and regular updating, and can frustrate users. There are an infinite number of online tools to choose from that perform whole site inspections automatically and show where inactive links are located.

### Surveys

The possibility of conducting surveys with portal users or with the portal's followers on social media should be considered, from time to time. These surveys are different from the sort conducted on potential users, since the portal's post-launch users have developed a better understanding about its content and thus can provide better feedback as to whether the structure of the portal is logical or even if there are errors in functionality that the developing team has not been able to detect.

## 8.2 Evaluation

The objective for evaluation might not always be clear, particularly for people who have participated in data gathering and the application of methodologies that end up forming part of reports, which are rarely, if ever, utilized. However, if portal implementers ask themselves critical questions, their evaluation can reveal the answers necessary for improvement in the short, medium or long term.

Evaluation techniques related to the fiscal transparency of public policies and programs can be utilized in this regard. The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), a global research center that works to reduce poverty by ensuring that policies are informed by scientific evidence, has identified different types of evaluation that can be applied to a project, depending on its needs and current phase (Dulfo et al., 2013). Based on these, below a handful of evaluation types are introduced that can help to identify the success of a portal or platform:

- **Project design evaluation** - If a project's goals and assumption are not reasonable, then there is a very small possibility that the solutions it generates are effective. This evaluation type implies reviewing how the theory of change or the logical framework is articulated in the planning stage. It can aid in identifying complementarity with other transparency and engagement activities that strengthen a comprehensive fiscal transparency policy, and help to avoid producing an isolated publication.

- **Process evaluation** - Also known as an implementation evaluation. This evaluation type analyzes the effectiveness of the operation of the project based on indicators, with baselines and targets. This evaluation allows for the identification of delays in activities or outputs that could call the achievement of higher objectives into question.

- **Impact evaluation** - This evaluation type measures the success of a project based on its objectives, wherein "success" can be defined broadly or in a limited manner, and can help differentiate the least effective actions from the most effective actions. For example, imagine that you are implementing a platform meant to facilitate social monitoring of the budget related to hospital infrastructure. You will not only want to know if the platform was implemented and if it is operating properly, but also if the potential users have been able to use it for the intended objective and if it has contributed to improvements in the quality of such infrastructure.

- **Cost/benefit and cost comparison evaluations** -

- a) **Cost/benefit** - quantifies the benefits and costs of an activity and places them on the same matrix (often assigning a monetary value to the benefits).

- b) **Cost comparison** - differentiates the development and implementation costs of similar initiatives.

