

OGP National Action Plan Guidance Note¹

This note was developed by the Open Government Partnership Support Unit to provide guidance to participating countries on how to draft a National Action Plan in accordance with the Articles of Governance and international best practices. For more information, email the Support Unit at info@opengovpartnership.org

National Action Plans are at the core of a country's participation in OGP. They are the product of a co-creation process in which government and civil society define ambitious commitments to foster transparency, accountability and public participation. This guidance note reflects lessons learned from the first three years of OGP on producing high quality action plans. In addition, the note includes templates that will ensure all the necessary information on commitments and the development process is included in the action plan.

Main Action Plan Characteristics

Successful OGP action plans focus on ambitious national open government priorities; are relevant to the values of transparency, accountability and public participation; and contain specific, time-bound and measurable commitments.

Ambitious: OGP aims to promote ambitious open government reforms that stretch the government beyond its current state of practice, significantly improving the status quo by strengthening transparency, accountability and public participation in government. Countries may choose to initiate new open government initiatives in their action plans, or improve on existing, ongoing reforms. Countries are encouraged to show clear improvement from action plan to action plan.

Relevant: Countries should ensure that each commitment included in the action plan is clearly advancing one or more of the following open government principles:

- **Transparency:** This includes publication of all government-held information (as opposed to only information on government activities); proactive or reactive releases of information; mechanisms to strengthen the right to information; and open access to government information.
- **Accountability:** There are rules, regulations and mechanisms in place that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments. Commitments on accountability should typically include an answerability element, i.e. that they are not purely internal systems of accountability but involve the public.
- **Participation:** Governments seek to mobilize citizens to engage in a dialogue on government policies or programs, provide input or feedback, and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative and effective governance.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Governments embrace the importance of providing citizens with open access to technology, the role of new technologies in driving innovation, and the importance of increasing the capacity of citizens to use technology. E-government initiatives are welcome, but in order to be relevant to OGP, action plans should explain how these initiatives advance government transparency, accountability and/or public participation

¹ Article of Governance VI. OGP ACTION PLANS AND REPORTING. Action plans should be for a duration of two years, though individual commitments contained in these action plans may be for more or less than two years depending on the nature of the commitment. However, each action plan should include one-year and two-year benchmarks, so that governments, civil society organizations, and the Independent Reporting Mechanism (see below), have a common set of time-bound metrics to assess progress. As living documents, action plans may be updated as needed based on ongoing consultations with civil society. Any updates should be duly noted in the official version of the action plan on the OGP website.

SMART: Individual commitments should conform to the following:

- **Specific:** The commitment precisely describes the problem it is trying to solve, the activities it comprises and the expected outcomes.
- **Measurable:** It is possible to verify the fulfillment of the commitment. Where commitments have multiple sub-commitments, they are broken into clear, measurable milestones.
- **Answerable:** The commitment clearly specifies the main implementing agency, the coordinating or supporting agencies where relevant, and if necessary, other civil society, multilateral, or private sector partners who have a role in implementing the commitment.
- **Relevant:** For each commitment, the action plan should explain its relevance to one or more of the open government principles outlined above (transparency, accountability, public participation and technology & innovation).
- **Time-bound:** Commitment clearly states the date when it will be completed, as well as dates for milestones, benchmarks and any other deadline.

Action Plan Template²

<<Country name>>
National Action Plan
201X-201X

1. Introduction

Briefly explain the local context by discussing why open government efforts are important for the country. This section should also outline the governance reform priorities for the country and identify the grand challenges that the country intends to address through its OGP National Action Plan along with a justification.

2. Open Government Efforts to Date

Provide a brief narrative of key open government initiatives and accomplishments to date, particularly as they relate to the government's chosen grand challenges. This section should explain how the new action plan builds on previous OGP action plans and related efforts to strengthen open government reforms.

3. NAP Development Process

OGP participants commit to "co-create" their country action plans through a multi-stakeholder consultation process, with the active engagement of citizens and civil society. In this section please describe the NAP development process, including the consultation.

Please consider that regarding the consultation process, the IRM evaluates the following activities:

1. Availability of timeline: *Countries are to make the details of their public consultation process and timeline available (online at minimum) prior to the consultation.*

2. Adequate notice: *Countries are to consult the population with sufficient forewarning. Many countries have chosen to share written drafts two weeks before the official start of consultation to allow stakeholders to organize themselves.*

3. Awareness raising: *Countries are to undertake OGP awareness raising activities to enhance public participation in*

² This section includes the main components of an action plan. Each country can modify the format and add any sections they desire. However we strongly suggest to at least include the information in this template.



the consultation.

4. Multiple channels: Countries are to consult through a variety of mechanisms—including online and through in-person meetings—to ensure the accessibility of opportunities for citizens to engage.

5. Breadth of consultation: Countries are to consult widely with the national community, including civil society and the private sector, and to seek out a diverse range of views.

6. Documentation and feedback: Countries are to make a summary of the public consultation and all individual written comment submissions available online.

7. Consultation during implementation: Countries are to identify a forum to enable regular multi-stakeholder consultation on OGP implementation—this can be an existing entity or a new one.

4. Commitments

Each commitment as written must be specific, clear, and succinct. Each commitment should be no more than a few paragraphs or half a page in length. The level of ambition and relevance to OGP values should be clearly demonstrated. Experience has shown that action plans listing 5-15 high quality commitments are preferable to those with very large numbers of weaker commitments.

Use the following template for each commitment in your action plan.

Commitment Template	
Name and number of the Commitment	
Lead implementing agency	
Name of responsible person from implementing agency	
Title, Department	
Email	
Phone	
Other actors involved	Government
	CSOs, private sector, working groups, multilaterals
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed	
Main Objective	
Brief Description of Commitment (140 character limit)	
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment	





<p>Relevance</p> <p><i>Briefly describe the way in which this commitment is relevant to further advancing OGP values of access to information, public accountability, civic participation, and technology and innovation for openness and accountability. (A detailed description of these values is available in the OGP Values Guidance Note.)</i></p>			
<p>Ambition</p> <p><i>Briefly describe the intended results of the commitment and how it will either make government more open or improve government through more openness.</i></p>			
<p>Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment</p>	<p>New or ongoing commitment</p>	<p>Start Date:</p>	<p>End Date:</p>
<p>1.</p>			
<p>2.</p>			
<p>3.</p>			
<p>4.</p>			
<p>5.</p>			



Format and length

- Action plans should be clear, succinct, and action-oriented, approximately 8-12 pages in length and written in plain language with minimal use of jargon or technical terms.
- Governments are encouraged to work with multiple ministries and departments across the government to develop and implement their OGP commitments. For ease of communication, the contact information for the lead agency of each commitment should be included in the action plan.
- We strongly recommend that each action plan contain between 5 and 15 ambitious commitments. Where multiple commitments address the same policy issue, they should be grouped as individual milestones under a single commitment.
- The expected length of each commitment is approximately half a page. A few paragraphs that clearly state the specific action or reform the government is going to undertake should suffice.
- All actions plans must cover a two-year period. At minimum one-year and two-year milestones for each commitment are required so that governments, civil society organizations, and the Independent Reporting Mechanism, have a common set of time-bound metrics to assess progress.
- Commitments that will take longer than two years to implement are welcome as long as they are clearly marked in the country's next action plan.
- While action plans can be written in the country's official language, governments are required to submit an English translation to the OGP Support Unit.