

OGP HANDBOOK

Rules + Guidance
for Participants



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Version 4.0 (Formerly OGP POC Manual)

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1. Roles and responsibilities in OGP domestically

During its first eight years, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) has grown from eight founding countries to today including approximately 100 participating governments. Within each of these countries and local entities, interest to be part of the OGP development process has also grown among stakeholder within and outside of the government. This section provides the primary roles of domestic OGP partners, including efforts to strategically engage interested local participants.

1.1 The OGP Government Point of Contact

When a country reaches eligibility and decides to join OGP, a letter of intent must be submitted that identifies the lead ministry and minister for the OGP agenda, as well as a public official responsible for coordinating a participating government's domestic and international OGP activities.¹ OGP refers to this person as a Government Point of Contact or POC. The role is crucial and multidimensional; points of contact are at the forefront of transparency, participation, and accountability efforts for an OGP participating government.

OGP Point of Contact responsibilities and activities:

- **Engage stakeholders:** Engage civil society and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis. This engagement includes the development and management of a multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) in cooperation with civil society (see section 1.2), per [OGP's Participation and Co-creation Standards](#).
- **Engage the OGP Support Unit:** Work with the OGP Support Unit to assist in the action plan development process, assess all available resources, and identify international best practices for potential local application.
- **Government coordination:** Work with other government agencies involved in relevant issues that emerge during the co-creation and implementation process.
- **Online repository:** Collect, publish, and document a repository on the domestic OGP website/webpage in line with IRM guidance. The repository should include information about OGP processes and commitment completion, including evidence of the completion. It should also be accessible without password or credentials and updated at least every six months (see section 5).
- **Development of an End of Term Self-Assessment Report:** The report captures ongoing engagement with civil society and other members of the multi stakeholder forum and final results of the developed commitments. (see section 4.2).
- **Engage the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM):** Activities include:
 - Communicating with the IRM team and researchers, providing information and contacts to the IRM researcher regarding OGP in the country as well as providing comments during the review process of IRM reports.
 - Assisting and facilitating the use of IRM reports to identify and address areas for improvement and to encourage adoption of IRM recommendations with OGP stakeholders in the country.
 - Engaging with the IRM team and researchers to disseminate IRM report findings, for example participating in IRM report launches and collaborating to secure high-level participation. For more information on the IRM process see the [IRM Procedures Manual](#).
- **Participate in all global OGP events and all relevant regional events:** This also requires informing senior government officials about OGP events and activities and facilitating their participation and encouraging high-level attendance at regional events and global summits.
- **Participate in peer exchange activities:** Participation includes either providing support to colleagues or requesting opportunities for collaboration and learning.

¹ OGP Local participants follow a slightly different process. The OGP Local program aims to harness the innovation and momentum demonstrated by local governments and civil society partners across the world. The details of OGP Local engagement will be discussed by the Steering Committee in 2019.

1.2 The Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF)

The participation of both civil society and government is essential to the success of the Open Government Partnership. That is why OGP participating governments commit to developing and implementing their action plans through a multi stakeholder process, with the active engagement of citizens and civil society. A Multi-Stakeholder Forum is a mandatory, standing consultative body that assists in this process, and is a cornerstone of each participating government's successful participation in the OGP process. It should meet every three months in order to comply with basic guidance.

While the structure of every MSF will vary to reflect local contexts and demands, all MSFs are responsible for assisting in the oversight of the OGP process to ensure that, in accordance with the the [OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards](#), it is open and inclusive of all stakeholders. MSFs must also:

- Comprise representation from both government and civil society.
- Meet at least every quarter.

A participating government that does not maintain a MSF in compliance with these requirements has acted *contrary to process* for that action plan cycle (see section 6).

For more information about MSFs and some practical examples, see section 5 of the [OGP Participation and Co-creation Toolkit](#).

1.3 The Local IRM Researcher

OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) will recruit and appoint an independent researcher for each OGP member to conduct an evaluation of each action plan.

Local IRM Researchers are responsible for:

- Working with all stakeholders to develop independent assessments of a participating government's development and implementation of its action plan, progress in fulfilling open government principles, and establish recommendations to enhance participation in the OGP process and provision of assistance to adopt these recommendations.
- Offering support and learning to OGP Government Points of Contact, MSFs, and other stakeholders based on their participation as an observer in local OGP activities.
- Participating as observers in domestic OGP activities, offering support for learning and enhanced dialogue, and promoting knowledge and adoption of the recommendations made in their IRM reports.

For more information about the IRM process, see the [IRM Procedures Manual](#). The names and contact information of all IRM researchers is available [here](#).

1.4 The OGP Support Unit

The OGP Support Unit was created to provide guidance to government and civil society stakeholders on how to most effectively participate in OGP. As part of this effort, OGP has broadened the support it provides them, including defining and developing a tailored set of [services](#) that stakeholders can access across the OGP cycle. The Support Unit aims to ensure that high-quality direction and information is available to OGP stakeholders, whether directly, through institutional partners, or through peer-to-peer engagement. Specific OGP Support Unit activities include:

- **Providing guidance on meeting OGP requirements and best practices:** The OGP Support Unit provides regular guidance to both government and civil society in understanding and implementing the minimum and advanced requirements of the [OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards](#), as well as other rules and procedures.

- **Outreach and awareness raising:** Raising awareness of, and promoting greater engagement with, national and local OGP processes is essential to a successful partnership. The OGP Support Unit provides both general support to stakeholders in designing engagement strategies and assistance reaching out to specific actors.
- **Political engagement:** By mobilizing OGP's Steering Committee, ambassadors, envoys, and other champions, the OGP Support Unit helps build political support for open government reforms. This may include arranging bilateral meetings, leveraging OGP and third-party high-level events, and diplomatic outreach. The OGP Support Unit also provides guidance for ensuring continued support for open government reforms during political transitions.
- **Technical assistance:** With support from relevant partners, experts and practitioners, the OGP Support Unit provides assistance in the development, implementation and monitoring of commitments in a wide array of issue areas, including open contracting, open data, fiscal transparency, public services, anti-corruption, civic space, citizen engagement and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Peer exchange and learning:** The OGP Support Unit can help broker virtual peer-to-peer discussions; leverage bilateral visits for open government-related study tours; arrange for webinars, and cross-country and sub-regional workshops on OGP processes or on specific thematic reforms; and help assist in the establishment of standing sub-regional peer exchange networks.

The OGP Support Unit has been developed to reflect a cross section of OGP teams and stakeholder challenges. Tailored to the specific needs of each participant, the OGP Support Unit includes individual leaders with extensive experience advancing open government reforms across a range of issues and regions (more information about the OGP teams and staff can be found [here](#)).

Each OGP participating government is assigned a representative from the Country Support Team at the Support Unit. This representative will serve as the participant's primary contact and resource for support and will be happy to respond to any questions.

2. OGP calendars and timelines

This section outlines the biennial calendar for all participating governments. The Support Unit, based on rules issued by the OGP Steering Committee, provides governments and civil society with this information so they can plan accordingly and avoid delays. Having clear rules about delivery dates, extensions, and consequences allows for planning and the avoidance of delays, as well as the fair treatment of all participating governments and stakeholders.

The OGP process is based on a recurring two-year action plan cycle. As outlined above, this includes the co-creative development of action plans, their implementation, and the monitoring, reporting and assessment of progress (including both self-assessment by the participating government, and independently by the local IRM researcher).

Governments will need to complete an end of term Self-Assessment Report for each action plan upon completion of the two-year cycle. Governments will also be responsible for maintaining and regularly updating regularly an online repository with information and evidence about key co-creation processes and commitment completion, as mentioned in section 1.1.

The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) will produce two reports during the two-year action plan cycle. Between May and July of the year following action plan submission, the IRM will deliver a Design Report. This report includes an assessment of the co-creation process, action plan scope, and commitment design.

Nine months after the end of the action plan implementation cycle, the IRM will deliver an Implementation Report. This report focuses on the progress and results achieved during the two-year implementation period of the action plan.

2.3 Political transitions and elections

Political transitions pose clear challenges to the timely delivery of action plans. In advance of and during these periods, it can be difficult to secure high-level political support to develop or implement ambitious commitments. Moreover, it is important that those responsible for implementing commitments are part of the development process. Given these challenges, the following are options for delivery of an action plan during political transitions:

- **Wait a year:** Several participating countries have successfully waited for one year until the new administration and authorities are in place. It is important to note that the country will be considered to have acted contrary to OGP processes for one cycle (see section 6).
- **Limited action plan:** The second option is to develop a more limited action plan, subsequently allowing the new administration to develop an alternative, more streamlined co-creation process to add new commitments (while acting in accordance with action plan modification rules outlined in section 4.1). This allows a participating government to maintain momentum and avoid acting contrary to process. However, the commitments might not be very ambitious, or they might not be completed, depending on the priorities of the new administration. Note that in these cases, only the first co-creation process will be assessed by the IRM.
- **No adjustment to the action plan:** Some countries have chosen to develop regular action plans during transitions. In the publication “[Why OGP Commitments fall behind,](#)” the IRM highlights that beyond lack of capacity or coordination, a common cause for commitment failure is “*discontinuity from one administration to another during political transition.*” Therefore, if this option is chosen, a participating government should ensure clear communication channels with the incoming administration (and with civil society), and a thorough handover process.

Regardless of the option chosen, it is important to discuss the different approaches within the government, the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, and with the OGP Support Unit representative. The Multi-Stakeholder Forum plays a crucial role during political transitions, particularly in countries with a higher rate of government employee turnover, as it can provide important institutional memory.

3. Participation and co-creation tools

Civic participation is a core component of open government and an essential element of the OGP cycle. The OGP Articles of Governance outline that OGP participants commit to developing their action plans through a multistakeholder process, with the active engagement of citizens and civil society.

[OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards](#) set out requirements for engaging civil society, citizens, and other stakeholders throughout the OGP process, including:

- **Dissemination of information:** Provide the public, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders with timely information about all aspects of the OGP process, including feedback on how their input is taken into account.
- **Spaces and platforms for dialogue and co-creation:** Facilitate an inclusive and ongoing dialogue using a variety of spaces and platforms appropriate to the government context.
- **Co-ownership and joint decision making:** Government, civil society, and other stakeholders should jointly own and develop the process.

As established in the standards, these requirements reflect the often difficult realities of making open government reforms work. Past, successful reform models make clear that transformative and sustainable change require the efforts of coalitions made up of different sectors and groups, including ministers, secretaries, and officials, national and local CSOs, citizens, parliamentarians, academics, and the media.

The [OGP Participation and Co-creation Toolkit](#) provides guidance on developing successful co-creation and implementation processes. The Toolkit, through the presentation of proven best practices, offers a blueprint for adopting this shared, cross-sector approach.

For information on the minimum requirements for the co-creation process refer to section 6.

4. Guidance on drafting OGP documents: Action plan and End-of-Term Self-assessment report

4.1 Action plans

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 develop ambitious commitments to foster transparency, accountability, and public participation. This chapter reflects lessons learned from OGP participating governments on producing high quality action plans. In addition, the chapter includes templates that will ensure all the necessary information on commitments and the development process is included in the action plan. As participants begin their own processes, it is important to consider the following:

- **Action plans must be submitted to the OGP Support Unit in both the administrative language of the country and English.** Not only is this mandatory, but submitting in English ensures that people from other countries can read more about your open government reforms and that learning across borders can take place.
- **The official version of your action plan is the one published on the OGP website.** If a participating government wishes to amend any part of their action plan, they must do so within one year of the original due date for submission (that is, August 31st of the next year). To change the action plan, the participating government must send an updated version, in English and in the administrative language (if applicable), to the OGP Support Unit that clearly outlines all changes.

4.1.1 Main Action Plan characteristics

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

- **Ambitious goals:** 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. Participating governments may choose to initiate new open government initiatives in their action plans or improve upon ongoing reforms. They are also encouraged to show clear improvement from one action plan to the next.
- **Relevant:** Participating governments should ensure that each commitment included in the action plan is clearly advancing one or more of the following open government values:
 - **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 outward-facing component (i.e., they are not solely accountable to internal systems, but also involve the public).
 - **Public participation:** Governments seek to engage citizens in a dialogue on public policies or programs, and request their input, feedback, and contributions, which 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 many benefits of increasing its capacity. Technology and innovation cannot be a stand-alone principle but must support/advance the previous three principles.
- **The SMART framework:** Assisting participating governments in seeking effective, clear, and measurable commitments:
 - **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.
 - **Answerable:** The commitment clearly specifies the main agency responsible for implementation, 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 and innovation).
 - **Time-bound:** The commitment clearly states the date when it will be completed, as well as dates for milestones, benchmarks, and other potential deadlines.

4.1.2 Format and length

Experience has shown that action plans comprising 5-15 high-quality commitments spread over multiple themes are more effective than those with a large number of less ambitious commitments. In 2017, the Steering Committee strongly recommended that participating governments cap the number of commitments per action plan to 20, with a suggested maximum of five milestones per commitment, with the aim of incentivising more ambitious commitments.

OGP Local participants should deliver no more than five commitments in their action plans.

Additional considerations when determining commitment format and length:

- **Clarity:** Action plans should be clear, succinct, and action-oriented, and should be written in plain language with minimal use of jargon or technical terms.
- **Holistic:** Governments are encouraged to apply a whole-of-government approach to the development and implementation of their commitments.
- **Time-bound:** All action plans should cover a two-year period, with the implementation period ending on 31 August of the second year. At minimum, each commitment should have yearly milestones, so that governments, civil society organizations, and the IRM have a common set of time-bound metrics to assess progress.
- **Extension requirements:** Commitments that will take longer than two years to implement are allowed as long as they are clearly cited in the country's next action plan and include a two-year intermediate milestone.

4.1.3 Action plan template

This section provides an action plan template. Participating governments may modify the format, as long as the information required by this template is included.

<<Participating Government name>>

Action Plan 20XX–20XX

1. Introduction

Briefly explain the national or local context by discussing why open government efforts are important for the participating government. This section should also outline the governance reform priorities for the country or local entity and identify the major social, political, or economic issues to be addressed through its OGP 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 those that reflect collaboration with civil society and how they relate to the co-created commitments. This section should explain how the new action plan builds on previous action plans (if relevant), as well as related efforts to strengthen open government reforms.

3. Action plan development process

Describe the action plan development process, highlighting collaboration between the participating government and civil society and other stakeholders. Please expressly note compliance with the [OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards](#). Refer to the [OGP Participation and Co-creation Toolkit](#) for more information.

4. Commitments

The [following template](#) must be used for each action plan commitment.

Commitment Template	
Name and number of the commitment	
Commitment Start and End Date (E.g., 31 August 2019 - 31 August 2021)	
Lead implementing agency/actor	
Commitment description	
What is the public problem that the commitment will address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the social, economic, political, or environmental problem addressed by the commitment. When available, include baseline data and contextual facts when available.
What is the commitment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe what the commitment entails, its expected results, and overall objective.
How will the commitment contribute to solving the public problem?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the commitment will contribute to solving the problem or change government practice towards addressing the problem. <p><i>Tip: In order to do this, explain how the commitment will be implemented. Provide a clear description of how the milestones listed will achieve what the commitment sets out to do and obtain the expected results that will contribute to solving the problem.</i></p>
Why is this commitment relevant to OGP values?	<p>Consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the commitment disclosing more information, improving the quality of the information disclosed, improving accessibility of information to the public, or enabling the right to information? If yes, the commitment is relevant to transparency. Is the commitment creating or improving opportunities, or capabilities for the public to inform or influence decisions? Is the commitment creating or improving the enabling environment for civil society? If yes, the commitment is relevant to civic participation. Is the commitment creating or improving rules, regulations, and mechanisms to publicly hold government officials answerable to their actions? If yes, the commitment is relevant to public accountability. <p><i>Once you have reviewed the questions, provide information that aligns the relevance of your responses with each of the commitment values outlined above.</i></p>

Additional information		<i>Use this optional space to provide other useful information, for example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Commitment budget</i> • <i>Links to other government programs</i> • <i>Links to the National development plan or other sectoral / local plans</i> • <i>Links to other relevant plans, such as a National Development Plan or an Anti-Corruption Strategy</i> • <i>Link to the Sustainable Development Goals</i> 	
Milestone Activity with a verifiable deliverable		Start Date:	End Date:
Contact information			
Name of responsible person from implementing agency			
Title, Department			
Email and Phone			
Other Actors Involved	State actors involved		
	CSOs, private sector, multilaterals, working groups		

4.2 End-of-Term Self-Assessment Report

Participating governments must produce an End-of-term Self-Assessment Report. The report should focus on the final results of reforms completed in the action plan, consultation during implementation, and lessons learned.

The development of the End-of-term Self-Assessment Report should follow guidance established in the [Participation and Co-creation Standards](#). Refer to the [OGP Participation and Co-creation Toolkit](#) for more information.

While the End-of-Term Self-Assessment Report can be written in the country's official language, governments are required to submit an English translation to the OGP Support Unit. This section includes [provides a template](#) for the End-of-term Self-Assessment Report. Participating governments may modify the format, as long as the required information is included.

4.2.1 Self-Assessment Report template

<<Participating Government Name>>

End-of-Term Self-Assessment Report for Action Plan 20XX–20XX

1. Introduction and background

Briefly explain the national or local context by discussing why open government efforts are important. This section should reflect upon how the action plan and other governance initiatives are contributing to address major social, political, or economic issues that the country or local entity face.

It should also explain how the OGP commitments are relevant to the core open government values (transparency, accountability, public participation, and technology and innovation for openness and accountability).

2. Action plan process

A. Participation and co-creation throughout the OGP cycle

Provide a narrative of the government's approach to participation throughout the OGP cycle. Please expressly note compliance with relevant standards in the [OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards](#).

B. Participation and co-creation when implementing, monitoring, and reporting on an Action Plan

Provide a narrative of the government's approach to participation during implementation. Please expressly note compliance with the relevant standards in the [OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards](#).

3. IRM recommendations

Briefly explain how the five key recommendations from the latest IRM report were used to improve the process of action plan drafting and implementation in this action plan cycle.

4. Implementation of action plan commitments

Provide a complete description of the commitment implementation process, conditions, problems, etc. This may include a summary table of the progress and results on all of the commitments. Any information on modifications or updates on the commitments should be included here. Additionally, for each commitment write a brief explanation of the commitment and the main results achieved.

Commitment Completion Template	
Number and Name of Commitment	
Commitment Start and End Date (E.g., 31 August 2019 - 31 August 2021)	
Lead implementing agency	
Commitment Description	
What is the public problem that the commitment will address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the social, economic, political, or environmental problem addressed by the commitment. When available, include baseline data and contextual facts. <p><i>Tip: Use the information contained in your action plan. If something has changed, please flag it.</i></p>
What is the commitment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe what the commitment entails, its expected results, and overall objective. <p><i>Tip: Use the information contained in your action plan. If something has changed, please flag it.</i></p>
How will the commitment contribute to solving the public problem?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the commitment will contribute to solving the problem or change government practice towards addressing the problem. <p><i>Tip: In order to do this, explain how the commitment will be implemented. Provide a clear description of how the milestones listed will achieve what the commitment sets out to do and obtain the expected results that will contribute to solving the problem.</i></p> <p><i>Tip: Use the information contained in your action plan. If something has changed, please flag it.</i></p>
Why is this commitment relevant to OGP values?	<p>Consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the commitment disclosing more information, improving the quality of the information disclosed, improving accessibility of information

	<p><i>to the public or enabling the right to information? If yes, the commitment is relevant to Transparency.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Is the commitment creating or improving opportunities, or capabilities for the public to inform or influence decisions? Is the commitment creating or improving the enabling environment for civil society i? If yes, the commitment is relevant to civic participation.</i> ● <i>Is the commitment creating or improving rules, regulations, and mechanisms to publicly hold government officials answerable to their actions? If yes, the commitment is relevant to public accountability.</i> <p><i>Once you have reviewed the questions, provide information in line with the response on how the commitment is relevant to the values outlined above.</i></p> <p><i>Tip: Use the information contained in your action plan. If something has changed, please flag it.</i></p>			
Additional information	<p><i>Use this optional space to provide other useful information, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Commitment budget</i> ● <i>Links to other government programs</i> ● <i>Links to the National development plan or other sectoral or local plans</i> ● <i>Link to the Sustainable development goals</i> ● <i>Gender perspective analysis.</i> <p><i>Tip: Use the information contained in your action plan. If something has changed, please flag it.</i></p>			
Completion Level	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed
Description of the results	<p><i>Include specific activities within the reporting period (first or second year of the action plan) and, wherever possible, please indicate whether there has been</i></p>			

		<i>evidence of members of the public using the commitment or whether the commitment has had an effect.</i>		
Next Steps		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		
Milestone status		Start Date:	End Date:	Completion level
Contact information				
Lead implementing agency				
Persons responsible from implementing agency				
Title, Department				
Email and Phone				
Other Actors Involved	Government Ministries, Department/Agency			
	CSOs, private sector, multilaterals, working groups			
Additional Information				

5. Progress on eligibility criteria (optional)

Governments that have voluntarily taken steps to improve their performance on the OGP eligibility criteria as part of their action plan should identify those actions and outcomes.

6. Peer exchange and learning

Briefly describe involvement in peer exchange and learning activities. For example, please describe the nature and outcome of activities where you provided assistance to other countries or if you received assistance during action plan development and implementation.

7. Conclusion, other initiatives, and next steps

- A. **Lessons learned:** What were overall lessons learned and challenges encountered with respect to the action plan development and implementation?
- B. **Other initiatives (optional):** Report on any other initiatives or reforms undertaken to advance OGP values that were not included in the action plan.
- C. **Next steps:** What are next steps with regard to OGP generally?
- D. **Conclusion:** Report on the positive impact of the activities and related outcomes with respect to each commitment; this could include a broader assessment that may detail actions taken outside of the action plan itself, such as political and electoral developments, cultural changes, and plans for the future.

5. Guidance on creating an online repository

An Open Government Repository (OGR) is a website, webpage, or other electronic platform where information and evidence related to the action plan (including process and implementation) is publicly stored, organized, updated, and disseminated. It is meant to be a transparent and easy way for stakeholders to access up-to-date evidence related to a participating government's OGP activities.

Maintenance of online repositories is mandatory, and a country that does not maintain an online repository will have acted contrary to process for that action plan cycle (see section 6).

In addition to setting up the online repository, participating governments may wish to develop a communications strategy where all agencies and other relevant stakeholders share updates on the content, and encourage commentary and interaction on it.

Participating governments are not required to translate repository evidence and information into English. However, OGP encourages information to be provided both in the official language(s) for citizen accountability and in English to foster peer learning among the OGP community.

5.1 What qualifies as a repository?

The IRM guidance for repositories establishes the core requirements for all OGP repositories. This guidance states that participating governments may choose any platform or system for their online repository as long as it follows a set of guiding principles. The repository must be: 1) available online, without barriers to access, 2) linked to evidence, and 3) updated regularly.

5.1.1. Available online, without barriers to access

Anyone should be able to access the repository where the information is hosted. It should not require passwords nor credentials to access.

The website, webpage, or hyperlink to the repository must be visible, accessible, and findable, not hidden away in an obscure corner of an agency website. The ideal platform will be archived or perma-linked and provide interoperable data.

5.1.2 Linked to evidence

Participating governments are expected to publish evidence about the co-creation processes and progress on their OGP commitments. They should document, collect, and publish information on the repository that serves as clear evidence of what happened during the action plan development and implementation processes.

Evidence is defined as “the available facts that justify statements or propositions, proving they are true or valid.” It includes primary sources or direct links to objective information that accounts for the status of completion of activities, commitments, or milestones. It does not include secondary source materials, for example claims that describe activities without providing proof of the activity itself.

The following list provides examples of evidence to account for during the development and implementation of the action plan:

- Plans for public consultations on the development of the action plan
- Timelines, public invitations, interdepartmental invitations
- Evidence of setting up multi-stakeholder forums (coordinating committees, task forces, working groups, etc.)
- Terms of Reference for a coordinating group
- Minutes/memos of decisions to set up working groups
- Composition of the group, listing organizations and individuals included

- Evidence of public consultation and multi-stakeholder forums
- Advertising or notice for public consultation
- Invitations sent out
- Multi-stakeholder forum meeting agendas and/or minutes
- List of participants (affiliations sufficient in case names cannot be disclosed due to privacy considerations)
- Written proposals submitted by CSOs or other members of the public
- Documents, reports, and plans that are relevant to establish commitment baseline and government objectives
- Outputs of consultations (proposals, minutes, pictures, memos, etc.)
- Feedback on how public inputs or proposals have been considered
- Evidence of how the government has responded to the 5 Key IRM recommendations from the previous report
- Response to the IRM 5 Key Recommendations (the IRM strongly recommends governments to include a response to the IRM 5 Key Recommendations in their online repository)

The following list provides examples of evidence to account for during the implementation of commitments:

1. Documentation for iDraft of laws and status of legislative process on issue areas relevant to commitments
2. Records of decision-making, new regulations, or administrative orders
3. Evidence of commissioning research, procurement or consultancy terms of reference, calls for proposals
4. Evidence of technical documents relating to databases, information technology, etc.
5. Strategy documents, concept papers, and work plans produced in the process or as a result of commitments
6. Monitoring and evaluation material (inter-governmental or third party monitoring reports, etc.)
7. Evidence of budget decisions, financial and HR resource allocations
8. External/third-party analysis of documents (CSO shadow reports, independent tracking of commitment progress)
9. Audit reports
10. Photos, videos, multimedia as evidence of progress on commitments, events held
11. User statistics (if relevant)

Note: For the IRM's Design Report, the IRM will only assess if the repository provides evidence to account for the development of the action plan.

5.1.3 Updated regularly

As established in the [Participation and Co Creation Standards](#), when implementing, monitoring and reporting an action plan, the government should publish via the OGP website/webpage regular updates (i.e. at least every six months) on the progress of commitments. It includes progress against milestones, reasons for any delays and next steps. Therefore, the OGR has to be updated at least every six months.

The IRM suggests to include timestamps on the repositories that indicate when it was last updated.

5.2 Designing an online repository

In the design of their online repositories, participating governments should consider the following issues:

- **Establish some content guidelines.** Key decisions about the type of content accepted by the repository should be made and shared with implementing ministries/agencies beforehand. This ensures a level of quality control over metadata, formatting, and in some cases content of the deposited material. Identifying who will be responsible for documenting each commitment's progress and making sure they understand how evidence should be gathered and uploaded throughout the implementation process will be in the best interest of all stakeholders.
- **Legal considerations.** Make sure the platform of choice complies with national and international regulations, including those relating to data architecture, security, privacy, and accessibility and record-keeping.

5.2.1 Using your current OGP website

The OGP website required by the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards may also be used as the online repository, as long as the requirements noted in section 5.1 are met.

At its most basic version, this could be a series of electronic folders, including at least one per commitment and one for the action plan development process. To enhance accessibility, the folder could be complemented with a spreadsheet that tracks the commitments and the completion evidence available or, as several OGP participants have done, a online tracking dashboard.

It should be noted that a dashboard by itself is not considered a repository. Unless it is linked to evidence and is updated every six months, it will not suffice to cover the repository requirement.

5.2.2 Using ready-made tools

Similar to the basic version proposed above, a participating government may decide to use one of the ready-made online filing systems to house their repository. Two options for doing this are Google Drive or Dropbox. As mentioned previously, if this option is chosen, the government must ensure that this complies with domestic regulations, particularly those that have to do with privacy and security.

There are online manuals available for both [Google Drive](#) and [Dropbox](#). In order to use one of these platforms as a repository, folders would have to be created for each of the commitments in the action plan, and one relating to action plan processes. The administrator would have to make sure that the settings allow for public access to the folders and start uploading information as it becomes available. As in the previous case, the folders could be complemented with a spreadsheet to track progress.

5.2.3 Open source repositories

Participating governments may decide to adopt one of the open source open-access repositories that are available. The advantage of this model is that they support for a wide range of formats of documents for archiving are relatively easy to implement and their maintenance is not expensive. The other advantage is that these systems can facilitate the content aggregation to search engines. The following are Open Repository options:

- **E-prints:** EPrints is generic repository building software developed by the University of Southampton. It is intended to create a highly configurable web-based repository. EPrints is often used to store images, research data, audio archives, or anything that can be stored digitally.
- **DSpace:** DSpace is an open source software application that enables easy and open access to all types of digital content including text, images, moving images, audio, and data sets. It was developed by MIT and Hewlett Packard, and is completely customizable.
- **CONSUL:** CONSUL is an open source software designed to allow citizens to participate in day-to-day decisions of government institutions by facilitating the creation of participation initiatives. CONSUL can be customized to include different features and it is free.

6. Minimum participation requirements and acting contrary to process

A government's participation in OGP may be reviewed by the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee (C&S) or by the full Steering Committee upon recommendation by the C&S, if it acts contrary to process or contrary to OGP principles, as outlined in the [Procedural Review](#) policy. These are considered the minimum participation requirements for all OGP participating governments.

According to the OGP Articles of Governance, a participating government is considered to have acted "contrary to process" when any of the following occur:

1. The government does not publish a National Action Plan within 4 months of the due date
2. The government did not meet the International Association for Public Participation "involve" during development or "inform" during implementation of the NAP as assessed by the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM).
3. The government fails to collect, publish and document a repository on the national OGP website/webpage in line with IRM guidance.
4. The IRM Report establishes that there was no progress made on implementing any of the commitments in the participating government's action plan (N.B. this trigger automatically places a country under Procedural Review).

When a country is found to have acted contrary to process, the OGP Support Unit will notify the government via a letter that is published in the OGP website and in the OGP Gazette. If a country acts contrary to process for two consecutive action plan cycles, it will be placed under Procedural Review by the C&S. If a country fails to address the problems that lead to the review process, the C&S may consider to recommend to the full Steering Committee that the country be designated as inactive.

OGP Local governments are subject to the same procedural guidelines and their participation will be subject to Procedural Review if they act contrary to OGP Process.

Please see below for specific definitions of these four triggers provided by the OGP Support Unit and the IRM.

6.1 Delayed action plans

If a participating government fails to deliver a new action plan before January 1 of the following year (more than four months late of the August 31 deadline), the OGP participating government will be shifted to the following year cohort (e.g., from the odd-year to the even-year cohort) and be considered to start a new action plan cycle. In this circumstance, a participating government will have acted contrary to OGP process for that action plan cycle. The participating government will receive a letter from the OGP Support Unit noting this occurrence, and it will be copied to the Criteria and Standards subcommittee to consider any additional actions or support as necessary (see section 6).

For a detailed description of OGP calendars please refer to section 2.

6.2. Minimum participation requirements during co-creation

Inline with [OGP's Participation & Co-creation Standards](#), in order to meet the International Association for Public Participation "involve" level of public influence during development as assessed by the IRM, governments will have to provide evidence in their action plan and online repository that the following three standards were met:

1. **Forum exists:** The forum meets at least once every three months (four times a year).
2. **Forum is multi-stakeholder:** Both government and civil society participate in it.
3. **Reasoned response:** The government will have to document or be able to show how they provided the feedback during the co-creation process, including a summary of major categories and/or themes proposed inclusion, amendment or rejection.

EXAMPLE: HOW TO PROVIDE A REASONED RESPONSE

1. Providing reasoned response on the selection of categories:

The Government of Matehuala wanted to focus on open government reforms that aligned with the 5-Year Plan on Corruption Reduction. Early in the consultation, a number of organizations pushed for reforms and commitments outside of the scope of the the 5-Year Plan. These included:

- Climate change adaptation
- College graduation rate reporting
- Public medical treatment cost transparency

To address these concerns, the government, with members of the multi-stakeholder forum, decided to include a “public services track” to focus on health and medical reforms. Because of the prior existence of commitments and an action plan under the Paris Climate Agreement for Matehuala, it was determined to be redundant to include additional commitments.

2. Providing reasoned response on the selection of themes:

The thematic working group on medical costs discussed a number of proposals. These included:

- Transparency of costs charged by public hospitals
- Theft rates of controlled substances
- Public participation in negotiation of prescription drug costs
- Shortening patent and trademark times for major life-saving medicines

1 and 2 are now subjects of commitments (“Open data on medical costs” and “Social Tracking on Medicine”). Proposal 3 was found to be compelling, but was not included in the action plan for legal reasons, as negotiations are protected by confidential business information around research and development. Proposal 4 is outside of the scope of open government, as it does not include transparency, participation, or accountability components in addition to being beyond the scope of a two-year action plan.

For more information about the [Participation and Co-creation Standards](#) please consult the [OGP Participation and Co-creation Toolkit](#).

6.3 Online repository

OGP participating governments have to collect, publish, and document a repository on the domestic OGP website/webpage in line with IRM guidance. The repository is also needed in order to meet the International Association for Public Participation “inform” during implementation.

The IRM researchers will assess whether governments have taken action to meet the standard for repositories. Actions include:

1. Availability online, without barriers to access
2. Linked to evidence
3. Updated regularly

For more information see section 5.

6.4 No progress made

If the IRM Report establishes that there was no progress made on implementing any of the commitments in the action plan, the government will *automatically* be placed under Procedural Review, regardless of being the first or second occurrence of acting contrary to process.