



IRM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

This document answers some of the frequently asked questions (FAQs) that the IRM receives, often during the launches of progress reports. The responses are consistent with our mandate, method, and messaging. We encourage you to review this document before presenting or speaking on report to any audience.

What is the IRM?

The IRM is a key means by which all stakeholders can track progress on OGP action plans within participating countries. By tracking progress, it promotes strong accountability between member governments and citizens.

The IRM works primarily through partnering with experienced, independent national researchers to author biannual independent assessment reports for each government participating in OGP. Each report assesses the development and implementation of action plans, progress in fulfilling open government principles, and will develop technical recommendations to help further refinement and implementation on the action plans.

What does the IRM consider?

The IRM is carried out at the national level. Broadly speaking, the IRM emphasizes two questions.

- **Process:** How was the OGP national action plan developed, implemented, and assessed?
- **Implementation:** Were the commitments made in the action plan implemented?
- **Context and scope:** In a country-specific way, does the action plan reflect the broader values of OGP as articulated in the Declaration of Principles and the Articles of Governance?

Exact wording and method for assessing for the areas covered can be found in the [IRM's Procedures Manual](#).

Is the IRM a comprehensive governance assessment?

No. The IRM is not assessing countries against any universal set of standards on open government broadly speaking. The scope of the IRM is limited to looking at each country's action plan development and implementation in its unique national context with the goal of stimulating civil society-government dialogue. Because OGP encourages diversity of action plans, the IRM aims to produce reports that are useful for national-level dialogue and inter-country conversation, rather than applying universal measurements. At its core, the IRM is focused on ensuring that countries develop strong commitments in accordance with OGP

principles, and deliver on them. This makes it different than other broad assessments of governance like the African Peer Review Mechanism or the OECD's Government at a Glance.

Does the IRM rank countries?

No. The IRM does not rank countries nor may IRM findings be used as conditional requirements for aid.

Is the IRM punitive?

No. The IRM primarily serves as an independent accountability mechanism for the OGP. Successful IRM reports are elaborated in a transparent, objective, non-intrusive, impartial, and apolitical manner. As reports on "living" action plans, the IRM aims to increase the level of government-civil society dialogue after the release of each report around national OGP processes and action plan implementation, and will measure the level of incorporation of recommendations made in the report in future action plans.

The IRM may inform, but does not take part in OGP's [response policy](#) for moving OGP countries to inactive status. According to the [OGP Articles of Governance](#), if "a participating government repeatedly (for three consequent years) acts contrary to the OGP process and to its Action Plan commitments, fails to adequately address issues raised by the IRM, or is taking actions that undermine the values and principles of OGP, the *Steering Committee* may upon recommendation of the *Criteria and Standards sub-committee* review the participation of said government in OGP" [emphasis added].

Does the IRM assess eligibility criteria?

The IRM is not involved in setting or measuring eligibility criteria nor is it involved in suspension of participating governments for no longer meeting those criteria. The job of compiling eligibility criteria falls to the Support Unit and the role of setting criteria falls to OGP membership.

How do I know that the IRM is truly independent of civil society and government?

As an independent, non-partisan body, the IRM is guided by, but not directly accountable to, the [Steering Committee](#) of the OGP, comprised of members of civil society and government. A panel of well-respected experts in governance, the [International Experts Panel \(IEP\)](#) directly oversees the IRM. For all issues of report content, IRM program staff report to the IEP, rather than directly to the OGP Support Unit or the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee has formulated an IRM Charter which is an annex to [OGP's Articles of Governance](#). This document guides the work of the IEP. This charter is reviewed by the Steering Committee in light of the work of the IEP, at the most, biannually. Between those annual reviews, the Steering Committee members act have a "watching brief" only over the IRM.

Further, the IRM has a strong [conflict of interest policy](#) which ensures that IEP members and IRM researchers do not have other obligations which would result in unfair or politicized assessments of OGP progress.

Who is on the IEP?

The IEP panel is made of ten Technical Advisors, all renowned experts in transparency, participation, and accountability, play the principal role of guiding development and implementation of the IRM.

Current membership of the IEP can be found at <http://bit.ly/1SoWfQj>.

How are local researchers selected?

There is one local researcher per country, although they may choose to work with a team. The process is based on a set of pre-established criteria with an open call for nominations (<http://www.opengovpartnership.org/node/5781>) at the national and international level. After developing a short list of one to five nominees for each country, the IEP will present the list to the national government. Government focal points will then have the opportunity to note any conflicts of interest or concerns about researcher neutrality. Neither governments nor civil society have veto on the selection of local researchers, however, which remains the task of the IEP.

How are members of the IEP chosen?

The IEP has been selected through a process of open nominations with final selection by the Steering Committee of the OGP. Nominees were ruled out for conflicts of interest. The Criteria and Standards Subcommittee of the OGP Steering Committee made final recommendations on IEP nominees for the Steering Committee which approved the membership.

What is the timeline for reporting?

The IRM “Progress Reports” come once in the middle of the two-year action plan in order to inform OGP countries. These reports are to be published 7 months after the first year of implementation of each action plan. They exist to inform the new OGP action plan. Once published, reports and executive summaries will be available in English and in official administrative languages, where relevant.

A second, shorter type of report, referred to as “End-of-Term Reports” come at the end of each action plan. These serve as final accountability at the end of two years for each report.

What is the process for quality control and peer review?

There are a number of safeguards to ensure objectivity and methodological transparency in the IRM process. The IRM will ideally be carried out following government self-assessment and, independent reports by civil society and academia. Taking into account the findings of these reports, the IRM will also serve as a “listening post” across government and civil society in each of the areas of assessment. Prior to publication of the IRM report in each country, there is a requirement for each government to have the opportunity to provide additional information and, at the researcher’s option, for other researchers to make comments. Following publication, all stakeholders will be able to post corrections, additional information, or analysis to the website.



How do I participate in the IRM?

To the greatest extent possible, the IRM and IEP will try to embody the principles of participation and transparency in OGP. To that end, the IRM staff is available for consultation, currently at [irm\(at\)opengovpartnership.org](mailto:irm(at)opengovpartnership.org). In addition, the IEP will carry out public participation events during the development of the pilot methods. At the national level, each local researcher will carry out participatory processes to gather information on key questions in the report. Governments and, at the researcher's discretion, other local stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide comment on manuscripts for review. Following publication, it is proposed that the government and civil society will be able to publish commentary alongside the IRM report online.

Does the IRM take complaints about government behavior?

No. The IRM reviews action plans on a regular, periodic basis. Questions about a particular country's process should ideally be directed at the country focal point, followed by the OGP Support Unit, and failing a satisfactory response at those levels, the Criteria and Standards Sub-Committee of the OGP Steering Committee. During the annual research process, however, individuals and organizations should make every effort to have their voices heard in biannual IRM reviews where relevant to the action plan. The IRM maintains an "open door policy" generally and encourages comments and questions at [irm\(at\)opengovpartnership.org](mailto:irm(at)opengovpartnership.org).

In the IRM subject to OGP's broader Access to Information policy?

The IRM is subject to OGP's broader access to information policy.

How many staff work for the IRM?

The IRM currently has six permanent staff members. They guide and support the work of the members of the IEP and the national-level researchers across nearly 70 countries.

