

# Independent Reporting Mechanism

Action Plan Review:  
South Korea 2021–2023

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Open  
Government  
Partnership



Independent  
Reporting  
Mechanism

## Introduction

Starting in January 2021, the IRM began rolling out the new products that resulted from the IRM Refresh process.<sup>1</sup> The new approach builds on the lessons after more than 350 independent, evidence-based, and robust assessments conducted by the IRM and input from the OGP community. The IRM seeks to put forth simple, timely, fit-for-purpose, and results-oriented products that contribute to learning and accountability in key moments of the OGP action plan cycle.

The new IRM products are:

1. **Co-Creation Brief:** brings in lessons from previous action plans, serves a learning purpose, and informs co-creation planning and design. This product rolled out in late 2021, beginning with countries co-creating 2022–2024 action plans.
2. **Action Plan Review:** an independent, quick, technical review of the characteristics of the action plan and the strengths and challenges the IRM identifies to inform a stronger implementation process. This product rolled out in early 2021 beginning with 2020–2022 action plans. Action Plan Reviews are delivered 3–4 months after the action plan is submitted.
3. **Results Report:** an overall implementation assessment that focuses on policy-level results and how changes happen. It also checks compliance with OGP rules and informs accountability and longer-term learning. This product rolled out in a transition phase in early 2022, beginning with 2019–2021 Action Plans ending implementation on 31 August 2021. Results Reports are delivered up to four months after the end of the implementation cycle.

This product consists of an IRM review of South Korea’s 2021–2023 action plan. The action plan is made up of 14 of commitments, evaluated as 16 commitments in this report to reflect distinct milestones 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, and 4.2. To aid clarity and assessment, the IRM clusters 2.1 and 2.2, as well as 4.1 and 4.2. This review analyzes the strength of the action plan to contribute to implementation and results. For commitment-by-commitment data, see Annex 1. For details regarding the methodology and indicators used by the IRM for this Action Plan Review, see Section IV: Methodology and IRM Indicators.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details regarding the IRM Refresh, visit <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/accountability/about-the-irm/irm-refresh/>.

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## Section I: Overview of the 2021–2023 Action Plan

*This action plan was developed through online engagement and mostly reflects government-proposed initiatives. While overall ambition is limited, the plan includes new policy areas such as participatory budgeting and social and digital inclusion. Effective implementation will require leadership by implementing agencies and strengthened CSO participation.*

The Republic of Korea joined the OGP in 2011. This report evaluates the design of the Republic of Korea’s fifth action plan. It includes 14 commitments, evaluated as 16 commitments in this report to reflect distinct milestones. The action plan is organized into three priority areas: strengthening civic space and public participation; tackling corruption; and promoting inclusive digital innovation. Two commitments have substantial potential for results. Compared to the previous action plan, commitment design reflects greater specificity. To aid clarity and assessment, this report clusters commitments related to social inclusion (2.1 and 2.2) and participatory budgeting (4.1 and 4.2).

This action plan was developed through online engagement and mostly reflects government-proposed initiatives. Through the public consultation process, the government received 140 proposals that were later reviewed by the Open Government Forum Korea (OGFK), the country’s multistakeholder forum. However, most of the final commitments were suggested by government agencies. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all OGFK activities were conducted online.<sup>1</sup> Budget and time for deliberation were some of the challenges that affected the inclusion of more CSO proposals on the final plan. The OGFK mandate did not ensure strong participation by implementing agencies. Recently, the OGFK institutional framework was upgraded from the ministerial to prime ministerial level, aiming to strengthen both the implementation and co-creation processes in the current and future action plan cycles.<sup>2</sup>

This action plan carries forward previous commitments on open data and citizen engagement in policy making. Some potentially transformative policy areas, such as disclosing court decisions and transparent beneficial ownership, were left out of the action plan as the OGFK could not determine which government agencies would be responsible for implementation. In terms of emerging policy areas, the action plan introduces new commitments on social inclusion, participatory budgeting, and whistleblower protection.

### AT A GLANCE

**Participating since:** 2011  
**Action plan under review:** 2021–2023  
**IRM product:** Action Plan Review  
**Number of commitments:** 16

#### Overview of commitments:

- Commitments with an open gov. lens: 14 (88%)
- Commitments with substantial potential for results: 2 (13%)
- Promising commitments: 3

#### Policy areas

Carried over from previous action plans:

- Citizen engagement in policy making
- Open data

Emerging in this action plan:

- Social inclusion
- Participatory budgeting
- Whistleblower protections

#### Compliance with OGP minimum requirements for co-creation:

- Acted according to OGP process: **Yes**

The action plan offers promising opportunities for progress on participatory budgeting and whistleblower protection. Commitments 4.1 and 4.2 could substantially improve participatory budgeting processes. They could broaden the national Participatory Budgeting Citizens' Committee and contribute to the uptake of participatory budgeting among local governments. Commitment 6 could modestly strengthen whistleblower protection by guaranteeing confidentiality and providing financial support.

Most of the action plan's commitments have modest potential for results. Proposed initiatives like the commitment on citizen engagement in policymaking (Commitment 3) continue existing government policies, but do not clarify to what degree they intend to introduce new initiatives. For some commitments, concretizing milestones and indicators could improve potential impact. To illustrate, Commitment 9 offers a critical opportunity to institutionalize civil society engagement in policymaking, but would benefit from clearly delineating the scope and intended outcomes of the planned civil society committee and ordinance. Other commitments have weak relevance to OGP values. Commitment 10, for example, aims to promote digital inclusion through expanding access to internet and training on digital skills. While the commitment can contribute to other action plan initiatives, it does not directly leverage planned improvements in digital access to facilitate citizen-government engagement or access to government information.

Likewise, Commitments 2.1 and 2.2, aimed at enhancing employment of women and people with disabilities, could more fully articulate their open government lens. While the commitments incorporate some information disclosure, they could strengthen opportunities for participation by focusing on mechanisms for women and people with disabilities to play an active role in policymaking. Both initiatives represent important steps to guaranteeing inclusion of these traditionally marginalized groups in the public and private sectors. The commitments' implementation would benefit from specifying the planned methods to improve job candidates' preparation, broaden recruitment, and ensure advancement. A working group of government ministries, participating private sector institutions, and CSOs could be fruitful in identifying barriers to recruitment or advancement of women and people with disabilities, and in offering solutions that could be tried and tested across sectors.

Commitment 11 could broaden its scope as it continues a Ministry of Interior and Safety initiative on participatory responses to local issues using science and information and communication technology (ICT). In 2020, eight local governments collaborated with CSOs on projects,<sup>3</sup> with ten additional projects planned under the commitment.<sup>4</sup> Although the commitment does not substantially expand the number of projects, it does introduce Self-Solving Groups and Living Labs as new mechanisms for participation.<sup>5</sup> Self-Solving Groups can include residents' concerns in projects, while Living Labs are oriented toward promoting, applying, and spreading technology. Clearly defined roles for each of the participating groups, particularly regarding project selection, can ensure full citizen participation in raising issues and exploring solutions. To address potential barriers to participation for vulnerable populations, the projects could incorporate CSOs that work directly with these populations.

Effective implementation of the action plan will require leadership by implementing agencies and strengthened CSO participation. To support continuity of commitments in cases of staff turnover, implementing agencies will need to ensure proper transfer of institutional knowledge

about the open government process, as well as continued engagement with CSOs, communities of practice, and beneficiaries of the action plan's initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of South Korea, *OGP The 5th National Action Plan 2021–2023 Korea* (OGP, Jul. 2021), <https://bit.ly/3zIDVN6>.

<sup>2</sup> Min. of the Interior and Safety, questionnaire by IRM, 7 Feb. 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Jihwan Park (OpenNet), correspondence with IRM, 13 Feb. 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Min. of the Interior and Safety Public Engagement Division and Min. of Science and ICT Space and Big Science Policy Division, questionnaire by IRM, 7 Feb. 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Ohyeon Kweon (Code for Korea), interview by IRM, 21 Feb. 2022.

## Section II: Promising Commitments in South Korea’s 2021–2023 Action Plan

The following review looks at the three commitments that the IRM identified as having the potential to realize the most promising results. This review will inform the IRM’s research approach to assess implementation in the Results Report. The IRM Results Report will build on the early identification of potential results from this review to contrast with the outcomes at the end of the implementation period of the action plan. This review also analyzes challenges, opportunities, and recommendations to contribute to the learning and implementation process of this action plan.

**Table 1. Promising commitments**

Promising Commitments
<b>4.1 and 4.2. Participatory budgeting:</b> These commitments would improve the national participatory budgeting system by strengthening the Citizens’ Committee, and would support local governments’ adapting participatory budgeting tools to their specific context and needs.
<b>6. Protect whistleblowers:</b> This commitment would bolster whistleblower confidentiality guarantees and provide financial support for expenses related to whistleblowing.

### **Commitment Cluster 4.1 and 4.2: Participatory budgeting**

Ministry of Economy and Finance Participatory Budgeting Division and Ministry of the Interior and Safety Local Finance Cooperation Division

For a complete description of the commitment, see Commitment 4 in [South Korea’s 2021–2023 Action Plan](#).

### **Context and objectives:**

Participatory budgeting has been mandatory at the local level since the amendment of the Local Finance Act in 2011. The law does not outline a precise definition of participatory budgeting,<sup>1</sup> but allows local governments to consider their particular context in the adoption and operation of participatory budgeting. In 2014, further amendments required local governments to attach citizen opinions to the budget draft.<sup>2</sup> The South Korean model for participatory budgeting builds on the Porto Alegre experience. It consists of a participatory council of neighborhood representatives elected by communities and mayor-recommended experts. They assume responsibility for discussing, evaluating, and prioritizing citizens’ proposals.<sup>3</sup> In 2018, the government also implemented a national participatory budgeting system known as My Budget.<sup>4</sup>

This cluster of commitments includes two initiatives to enhance participatory budgeting by central and local governments. At the national level, Commitment 4.1 intends to expand the Participatory Budgeting Citizens’ Committee and continue to facilitate online and in-person opportunities for citizens to submit proposals, as well as debates hosted by ministries on potential projects. Developing existing practices at the local level, Commitment 4.2 proposes yearly Citizen Participatory Budgeting processes, guaranteeing participation in all stages of the budget process, from preparation to the settlement of accounts. Through this initiative, the government will offer consulting to town, township, and neighborhood governments to develop tools for collecting citizen input, including surveys, public hearings, and electronic voting.<sup>5</sup>

These commitments advance the OGP values of transparency and civic participation, offering access to information on budget development and expanding opportunities for citizens to provide input on government projects.

### **Potential for Results: Substantial**

At the national level, the proposed activities have the potential to improve participatory budgeting by expanding the number of participants and taking steps to promote representation of marginalized groups. The national participatory budgeting system established a Citizen's Committee of 400 representatives, assisted by 68 experts. In 2020, over 1,399 proposals were received, with 38 added to the final budget, representing approximately 244 billion won (224 million USD). These introduced projects such as wheelchair accessible buses, marine pollution surveillance, and counseling for sexual assault victims.<sup>6</sup> Commitment 4.1 plans to expand the Participatory Budgeting Citizens' Committee to 2,000 representatives, with a composition reflective of the national population in terms of gender, region, and age.<sup>7</sup> Inclusion of women, children, and people with disabilities could expand the range of issues that are considered during the process. In addition, a more exhaustive online and in-person deliberation process could ensure that all initiatives included in the budget consider stakeholder perspectives. According to the Ministry of Economy and Finance Participatory Budgeting Division, the commitment intends to extend participation beyond early-stage opportunities, given that the existing process limits participation to the call for citizen proposals and preference voting.<sup>8</sup>

Under Commitment 4.2, developing tailor-made solutions could lead to the progressive adoption of citizen participatory budgeting as a permanent local government policy, according to the Ministry of the Interior and Safety Local Finance Cooperation Division. The Ministry did not clarify how many projects were to be implemented under this commitment.<sup>9</sup> Participatory budgeting has already allowed cities to address safety, sanitation, employment, and welfare issues. To illustrate, one city installed fire extinguishers to prevent fires in narrow alleys, while another city coordinated home repair visits for marginalized people with poor living conditions.<sup>10</sup> However, a 2020 study showed that there are multiple factors that influence the adoption of participatory budgeting policies, such as administrative capacity and the progressiveness of mayors and councils.<sup>11</sup> In some cases, a lack of political investment in participatory budgeting has limited its scope. For example, in Seoul, a new mayor reallocated a large portion of the budget for participatory budgeting to infrastructure projects in 2021.<sup>12</sup> Building local governments' commitment to participatory budgeting can contribute to fiscal transparency by facilitating information sharing between citizens and budget authorities; enhancing bottom-up monitoring of municipal governments by citizens; and providing a public forum where citizens bond socially and create political consensus.<sup>13</sup> This, however, requires governments to make resources available for successful implementation of projects relevant to citizens. This commitment could also expand public engagement in participatory budgeting, which previously has only included a small portion of citizens due to the low level of awareness of opportunities to participate in the budgeting process.<sup>14</sup>

### **Opportunities, challenges, and recommendations during implementation**

This commitment provides the government an opportunity to define the minimum requirements participatory budgeting mechanisms should include in order to improve these processes going forward. The proposed activities can also advance participatory budgeting in local governments that have made little progress, strengthen local politicians' investment in participatory budgeting, and expand citizen engagement. During implementation, inclusion of vulnerable



populations will require all materials to be adapted to the specific needs of each group (e.g., braille for people with visual impairments). The government should also consider citizens' levels of familiarity with budgeting and public finance processes, which in some cases may require additional training. The following recommendations can strengthen this commitment's implementation:

- Adopt rules of procedure for the national Participatory Budgeting Citizens' Committee to guarantee that all proposals are evaluated following standardized criteria. Information on proposals must be publicly available during all stages of the process, including implementation of selected projects. Ministries must also provide citizens with feedback on their decisions to include or exclude a proposal.
- The government and the national Participatory Budgeting Citizens' Committee could assess the proposals received to analyze whether affirmative actions should be adopted to include more participation of marginalized groups.
- The national Participatory Budgeting Citizens' Committee could monitor implementation of prioritized projects.
- A local citizens' committee, similar to the national Participatory Budgeting Citizens' Committee, could be considered to provide a formal and permanent dialogue mechanism that reflects the particular characteristics of the community.
- The government needs to consider the needs of specific groups, such as the elderly and the disabled, when designing and implementing information collection tools to guarantee equal participation.

### **Commitment 6: Protect Whistleblowers**

Protection and Reward Policy Division, Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC)

For a complete description of the commitment see Commitment 6 in [South Korea's 2021–2023 Action Plan](#).

### **Context and Objectives**

The country has enacted laws that offer protections and rewards to whistleblowers within the public and private sectors. Whistleblowing in the Republic of Korea resulted in the removal of 1,621 public officials between 2014–2018 due to corruption like embezzlement and abuse of authority.<sup>15</sup> The prevalence of whistleblowing increased after legislative protection was introduced in 2011.<sup>16</sup> The number of whistleblowers rose from 292 to 4,531 between 2011 and 2021, with fluctuations due to measures related to the professional reporting system.<sup>17</sup> Through this commitment, the government proposes new amendments to the Act on the Prevention of Corruption and the Establishment and Management of the Anti-corruption and Civil Rights Commission (passed in 2008 and amended in 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020)<sup>18</sup> and to the Protection of Public Interest Reporters Act (passed in 2011 and amended in 2014, 2015, and 2017).<sup>19</sup> Respectively, these acts protect public and private sector whistleblowers. According to the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission Protection and Reward Policy Division, the intended amendments aim to strengthen confidentiality by creating effective sanctions for negligent disclosure; expand exemption from responsibility if the reporter participated in corruption or illegal acts; expand relief funds to cover expenses incurred in legal procedures resulting from whistleblowing; and support non-real-name disclosures by allowing whistleblowers to file a report in the name of a lawyer, without revealing personal information.<sup>20</sup>

### **Potential for Results: Modest**

Further amendments to the Republic of Korea’s strong legal whistleblower protections could continue to address some of the confidentiality issues surrounding whistleblowing. According to the action plan, ensuring confidentiality is one of the key challenges for improving perceptions of the current whistleblower protection system; 67.5% of citizens who participated in the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Survey believe whistleblowing could bring “subsequent career-related disadvantages.”<sup>21</sup> Improved protections and benefits could encourage more people to come forward and minimize concerns about the consequences of collaborating with authorities.

While Transparency International—Korea believes that strengthening legal protection of whistleblowers’ confidentiality would be helpful, it perceives this commitment as falling short on two key points. First, a gap in implementing legal whistleblower protections has limited their impact. Among other factors, this gap includes organizational practices on implementing anti-corruption regulations, and court and prosecutor behavior. Second, the country’s social system emphasizes a community-oriented culture in which potential whistleblowers experience pressure from their organizations and communities. In practice, this pressure can have a stronger impact than any protection offered by the government.<sup>22</sup> This issue was also mentioned in a 2017 study on factors that contribute to government employees’ intention to report corruption in their organization. Analysis of survey responses from 5,706 Korean central government officials showed that support for whistleblowing from both colleagues and organizations was the strongest predictor of employees’ attitude toward whistleblowing. The benefits of formal legal whistleblower protection were perceived to be limited if faced with potentially hostile responses from colleagues and the wider organization.<sup>23</sup>

### **Opportunities, challenges, and recommendations during implementation**

This commitment offers an opportunity to explore gaps in implementation of whistleblower protection legislation. It also underscores the need to address the cultural and social dynamics that shape the context for whistleblowing in the Republic of Korea. The following recommendations could enhance this commitment:

- In tandem with this commitment, the government can assess the implementation process for legislation on whistleblower protection to identify weaknesses in enforcement and areas of opportunity. This assessment could particularly focus on courts, prosecutors, and organizational culture. This assessment could contribute to additional changes to legislation or other administrative measures aimed to strengthen the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission’s role.
- Civil society and the government could collaborate on continued public information campaigns on whistleblowing, focusing on providing information on the system’s accountability mechanisms and the additional protections to be enacted. Trainings and promotional materials can also outline the importance of supporting colleagues who report corruption. These efforts should be informed by awareness of the role of gender, tenure length, and position type in shaping risks associated with whistleblowing.

<sup>1</sup> *Participatory Budgeting via National Law: What works and what doesn’t*. (People Powered, Dec. 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Soonhee Kim (ed.), “Participatory Governance and Policy Diffusion in Local Governments in Korea: Implementation of Participatory Budgeting” *KDI Research Monograph*, No. 2016-01 (Korea Development Institute, 2016), <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/200949/1/kdi-res-monograph-2016-01.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Sun-Moon Jung, *Participatory budgeting and government efficiency: evidence from municipal governments in South Korea* (Seoul National University, 25 Feb. 2021), <https://bit.ly/3sDwSmW>.

<sup>4</sup> The International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD), “‘My Budget’, a National Participatory Budgeting experiment in South Korea” (accessed Apr. 2022), <https://oidp.net/en/practice.php?id=1236>.

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- <sup>5</sup> Government of South Korea, *OGP The 5th National Action Plan 2021–2023 Korea* (OGP, Jul. 2021), <https://bit.ly/3zIDVN6>.
- <sup>6</sup> IOPD, “My Budget’, a National Participatory Budgeting experiment in South Korea.”
- <sup>7</sup> Government of South Korea, *OGP The 5th National Action Plan 2021–2023 Korea*.
- <sup>8</sup> Min. of Economy and Finance Participatory Budgeting Division, questionnaire by IRM, 7 Feb. 2022.
- <sup>9</sup> Min. of the Interior and Safety Local Finance Cooperation Division, questionnaire by IRM, 7 Feb. 2022.
- <sup>10</sup> Government of South Korea, *OGP The 5th National Action Plan 2021–2023 Korea*.
- <sup>11</sup> Skip Krueger and HyungGun Park, “Pathways to Citizen Participation: Participatory Budgeting Policy Choice by Local Governments” *Chinese Public Administration Review* 11:1 (2020), <https://cpar.net/index.php/cpar/article/view/249>.
- <sup>12</sup> People Powered, “Q&A on National PB Laws: New Report Documents What Works, What Doesn’t and What We Don’t Know” (2021), <https://www.peoplepowered.org/news-content/qampa-on-national-pb-laws-new-report-documents-what-works-what-doesnt-and-what-we-dont-know>.
- <sup>13</sup> Jung, *Participatory budgeting and government efficiency: evidence from municipal governments in South Korea*.
- <sup>14</sup> People Powered, “Q&A on National PB Laws: New Report Documents What Works, What Doesn’t and What We Don’t Know.”
- <sup>15</sup> National Whistleblower Center, “South Korea’s Whistleblower Protection and Reward System” (accessed Apr. 2022), <https://www.whistleblowers.org/south-koreas-whistleblower-protection-and-reward-system/>.
- <sup>16</sup> Mark Worth, “Is the Climate for Whistleblower Rewards Finally Warming in Europe?” (*Whistleblower Network News*, 23 Apr. 2020), <https://whistleblowersblog.org/global-whistleblowers/is-the-climate-for-whistleblower-rewards-finally-warming-in-europe/>.
- <sup>17</sup> Sang-Hak Lee (Transparency International), correspondence with IRM, 24 Mar. 2022.
- <sup>18</sup> Government of South Korea, “Act on The Prevention of Corruption and the Establishment and Management of the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission” (Law Viewer, 29 Dec. 2020), [https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng\\_mobile/viewer.do?hseq=55383&type=part&key=5](https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng_mobile/viewer.do?hseq=55383&type=part&key=5).
- <sup>19</sup> Government of South Korea, “Protection Of Public Interest Reporters Act” (Law Viewer, 31 Oct. 2017), [https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng\\_mobile/viewer.do?hseq=45963&type=sogan&key=42](https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng_mobile/viewer.do?hseq=45963&type=sogan&key=42).
- <sup>20</sup> Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission Protection and Reward Policy Division, questionnaire by IRM, 7 Feb. 2022.
- <sup>21</sup> Government of South Korea, *OGP The 5th National Action Plan 2021–2023 Korea*.
- <sup>22</sup> Sang-Hak Lee (Transparency International), interview by IRM, 18 Jan. 2022.
- <sup>23</sup> Yongjin Chang, Mark Wilding, and Min Chul Shin, “Determinants of Whistleblowing Intention: Evidence from the South Korean Government,” *Public Performance & Management Review* 40 no. 4 (May 2017), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317053287\\_Determinants\\_of\\_Whistleblowing\\_Intention\\_Evidence\\_from\\_the\\_South\\_Korean\\_Government](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317053287_Determinants_of_Whistleblowing_Intention_Evidence_from_the_South_Korean_Government).

## Section III: Methodology and IRM Indicators

The purpose of this review is not an evaluation as former IRM reports. It is intended as an independent, quick, technical review of the characteristics of the action plan and the strengths and challenges the IRM identifies to inform a stronger implementation process. This approach allows the IRM to highlight the strongest and most promising commitments in the action plan based on an assessment of the commitment per the key IRM indicators, particularly commitments with the highest potential for results, the priority of the commitment for country stakeholders, and the priorities in the national open government context.

To determine which reforms or commitments the IRM identifies as promising, the IRM follows a filtering and clustering process:

**Step 1:** Determine what is reviewable and what is not based on the verifiability of the commitment as written in the action plan.

**Step 2:** Determine if the commitment has an open government lens. Is it relevant to OGP values?

**Step 3:** Commitments that are verifiable and have an open government lens are reviewed to identify if commitments need to be clustered. Commitments that have a common policy objective or commitments that contribute to the same reform or policy issue should be clustered and their “potential for results” should be reviewed as a whole. The clustering process is conducted by IRM staff, following the steps below:

- a. Determine overarching themes. They may be as stated in the action plan or if the action plan is not already grouped by themes, IRM staff may use as reference the thematic tagging done by OGP.
- b. Review objectives of commitments to identify commitments that address the same policy issue or contribute to the same broader policy or government reform.
- c. Organize commitments by clusters as needed. Commitments may already be organized in the action plan under specific policy or government reforms or may be standalone and therefore not clustered.

**Step 4:** Assess the potential for results of the cluster or standalone commitment.

The filtering process is an internal process and data for individual commitments is available in Annex I below. In addition, during the internal review of this product, the IRM verifies the accuracy of findings and collects further input through peer review, OGP Support Unit feedback as needed, interviews and validation with country stakeholders, and sign-off by the IRM’s International Experts Panel (IEP).

As described in the filtering process above, the IRM relies on **three key indicators** for this review:

### I. Verifiability

- “Yes” Specific enough to review. As written in the action plan the objectives stated and actions proposed are sufficiently clear and includes objectively verifiable activities to assess implementation.

- “No”: Not specific enough to review. As written in the action plan the objectives stated and proposed actions lack clarity and do not include explicit verifiable activities to assess implementation.

\*Commitments that are not verifiable will be considered “not reviewable” and further assessment will not be carried out.

## II. Does it have an open government lens? (Relevant)

This indicator determines if the commitment relates to open government values of transparency, civic participation, or public accountability as defined by the *Open Government Declaration*, the *OGP Articles of Governance*, and by responding to the guiding questions below. Based on a close reading of the commitment text, the IRM first determines whether the commitment has an open government lens:

- **Yes/No:** Does the commitment set out to make a policy area, institution, or decision-making process more transparent, participatory, or accountable to the public?

The IRM uses the OGP Values as defined in the Articles of Governance. In addition, the following questions for each OGP value may be used as a reference to identify the specific open government lens in commitment analysis:

- **Transparency:** Will the government disclose more information, improve the legal or institutional frameworks to guarantee the right to information, improve the quality of the information disclosed to the public, or improve the transparency of government decision-making processes or institutions?
- **Civic Participation:** Will government create or improve opportunities, processes, or mechanisms for the public to inform or influence decisions? Will the government create, enable, or improve participatory mechanisms for minorities or underrepresented groups? Will the government enable a legal environment to guarantee freedoms of assembly, association, and peaceful protest?
- **Public Accountability:** Will the government create or improve opportunities to hold officials answerable for their actions? Will the government enable a legal, policy, or institutional framework to foster accountability of public officials?

## III. Potential for results

Formerly known as the “potential impact” indicator, it was adjusted taking into account the feedback from the IRM Refresh consultation process with the OGP community. With the new results-oriented strategic focus of IRM products, this indicator was modified so that in this first review, it laid out the expected results and potential that would later be verified in the IRM Results Report, after implementation. Given the purpose of this Action Plan Review, the assessment of “potential for results” is only an early indication of the possibility the commitment has to yield meaningful results based on its articulation in the action plan in contrast with the state of play in the respective policy area.

The scale of the indicator is defined as:

- **Unclear:** the commitment is aimed at continuing ongoing practices in line with existing legislation, requirements, or policies without indication of the added value or an enhanced open government approach in contrast with existing practice.
- **Modest:** a positive but standalone initiative or changes to process, practice or policies. Commitments that do not generate binding or institutionalized changes across

government or institutions that govern a policy area. For example, tools like websites, or data release, training, pilot projects

- **Substantial:** a possible game changer to the rules of the game (or the creation of new ones), practices, policies, or institutions that govern a policy area, public sector and/or relationship between citizens and state. The commitment generates binding and institutionalized changes across government.

This review was prepared by the IRM and overseen by the IRM’s International Experts Panel (IEP). For more information about the IRM refer to the “About IRM” section of the OGP website available [here](#).

## Annex 1: Commitment-by-Commitment Data<sup>1</sup>

### **Commitment 1: Engage youth in policy making and strengthen overseas networking**

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Modest

### **Commitment 2.1: Enhance gender diversity in all areas of society**

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- This commitment has been clustered as: Social Inclusion (Commitments 2.1 and 2.2)
- Potential for results: Unclear

### **Commitment 2.2: Expand balanced personnel management by enhancing representation of the disabled in the public sector**

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- This commitment has been clustered as: Social Inclusion (Commitments 2.1 and 2.2)
- Potential for results: Unclear

### **Commitment 3: Engage citizens in policy making**

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Modest

### **Commitment 4.1: Expand participatory budgeting**

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- This commitment has been clustered as: Participatory Budgeting (Commitments 4.1 and 4.2)
- Potential for results: Substantial

### **Commitment 4.2: Enhance fiscal transparency of local governments by promoting citizen participatory budgeting**

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- This commitment has been clustered as: Participatory Budgeting (Commitments 4.1 and 4.2)
- Potential for results: Substantial

### **Commitment 5: Provide an online system for public institutions to order network equipment that matches their capacity**

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? No
- Potential for results: Unclear

### **Commitment 6: Protect whistleblowers**

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Modest

### **Commitment 7: Leverage big data to address unfair practices in daily life**



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifiable: Yes</li> <li>• Does it have an open government lens? Yes</li> <li>• Potential for results: Modest</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment 8: Create a transparent society through collaboration between citizens and government</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifiable: Yes</li> <li>• Does it have an open government lens? Yes</li> <li>• Potential for results: Modest</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment 9: Lay the groundwork for civil society to grow</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifiable: Yes</li> <li>• Does it have an open government lens? Yes</li> <li>• Potential for results: Modest</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment 10: Enhance digital inclusiveness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifiable: Yes</li> <li>• Does it have an open government lens? No</li> <li>• Potential for results: Unclear</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment 11: Make use of science and digital technologies in tackling issues for local residents</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifiable: Yes</li> <li>• Does it have an open government lens? Yes</li> <li>• Potential for results: Modest</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment 12: Disclose data for citizen safety</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifiable: Yes</li> <li>• Does it have an open government lens? Yes</li> <li>• Potential for results: Modest</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment 13: Make government data accessible and usable for citizens</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifiable: Yes</li> <li>• Does it have an open government lens? Yes</li> <li>• Potential for results: Modest</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment 14: Increase the disclosure of meeting minutes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifiable: Yes</li> <li>• Does it have an open government lens? Yes</li> <li>• Potential for results: Unclear</li> </ul>

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**Editorial notes:**

1. For commitments that are clustered: the assessment of potential for results is conducted at the cluster level, rather than the individual commitments.
2. Commitment short titles may have been edited for brevity. For the complete text of commitments, please see South Korea's 2021–2023 action plan: <https://bit.ly/3zIDVN6>.



## Annex 2: Minimum Requirements for Acting According to OGP Process

According to OGP’s Procedural Review Policy, during development of an action plan, OGP participating countries must meet the “involve” level of public influence per the IRM’s assessment of the co-creation process.

To determine whether a country falls within the category of “involve” on the spectrum, the IRM assesses different elements from *OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards*. The IRM will assess whether the country complied with the following aspects of the standards during the development of the action plan, which constitute the minimum threshold:

1. **A forum exists:** there is a forum to oversee the OGP process.
2. **The forum is multistakeholder:** both government and civil society participate in it.
3. **Reasoned response:** the government or multistakeholder forum documents or can demonstrate how they provided feedback during the co-creation process. This may include a summary of major categories and/or themes proposed for inclusion, amendment, or rejection.

The table below summarizes the IRM assessment of the three standards that apply for purposes of the procedural review. The purpose of this summary is to verify compliance with procedural review minimum requirements, and it is not a full assessment of performance under *OGP’s Participation and Co-creation Standards*. A full assessment of co-creation and participation throughout the OGP cycle will be provided in the results report.

**Table 2. Summary of minimum requirements to act according to OGP Process**

<i><b>OGP Standard</b></i>	<i><b>Was the standard met?</b></i>
A forum exists. The Open Government Forum Korea (OGFK) was launched in 2017 and led the action plan development process during this cycle.	Green
The forum is multistakeholder. The OGFK is composed of 7 central and local government agencies and 11 civil society organizations. <sup>1</sup>	Green
The government provided reasoned response on how the public’s feedback was used to shape the action plan. <sup>2</sup>	Green

<sup>1</sup> Government of South Korea, *OGP The 5th National Action Plan 2021–2023 Korea* (OGP, Jul. 2021), <https://bit.ly/3zIDVN6>.

<sup>2</sup> Min. of the Interior and Safety, questionnaire by IRM, 7 Feb. 2022.