

# The Open Gov Guide

2024

Open  
Government  
Partnership



# Anti- Corruption

*Using Italy's OpenCoesione platform, over 25,000 young people have joined efforts to monitor public spending, an important accountability mechanism that can help increase competition for public contracts. Pictured: Alessandra Costarella and her classmates.*

# Asset and Interest Disclosure

Disclosure of assets and interests by public officials and their families can help prevent and detect cases of favoritism, conflicts of interest, and illicit enrichment. Publishing good quality data on asset and interest disclosure in an open format can allow journalists, watchdog organizations, and the public to know whether politicians are working for their constituents or their private interests.

### **Open Gov Challenge** Anti-Corruption

With OGP's [2023-2028 Strategy](#), OGP members are set to work toward a number of aspirational thematic reforms through the [Open Gov Challenge](#). This section of the *Open Gov Guide* addresses Anti-Corruption.

**Challenge prompt:** Develop or strengthen a whole-of-government anti-corruption strategy or roadmap.

Where strategies or roadmaps exist, improve policy, implementation and interoperability (including through OGP) across the areas below:

- Beneficial ownership
- Open contracting
- Political finance and asset and interest disclosure
- Lobbying
- Extractive industry transparency

## Key Terms

- **Assets and interests:** Assets and interests are resources with economic value that are held by public officials, including:
  - Fixed assets, such as real estate;
  - Moveable assets, such as vehicles or jewelry;
  - Financial assets, such as bank accounts, stocks, and bonds; and
  - Interests, such as secondary employment, business ownership, shareholder interests, and non-remunerated board membership or affiliation in non-profits or think tanks.
- **Conflict of interest:** In this context, a conflict of interest [occurs](#) “when a public official has interests in a private capacity that could improperly influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities.” Asset and interest disclosure laws typically also require disclosure of outside interests, such as secondary employment, business ownership, or shareholder interests.
- **Politically exposed person:** This term describes an [individual](#) who is or has been “entrusted with a prominent public function.” The financial industry also commonly uses this term to refer to immediate family members and close associates.

## The Evidence

Collecting and publishing asset and interest disclosure data can address various policy goals.

- Subjecting official assets to public [oversight](#) has been shown to save government money by [preventing](#) theft, [recovering](#) stolen assets, and helping convict officials who may have [hidden](#) their ill-gotten wealth abroad.
- Open asset and interest disclosure data can uncover corruption by allowing oversight institutions, journalists, and the public to review changes in wealth and verify the accuracy of disclosures against [other public registers](#).
- [Addressing](#) violations of the law uncovered by asset and interest disclosure data has been shown to increase confidence in public officials. Pairing open data with accountability mechanisms is especially effective.

## Reform Guidance

### Recommended Reforms

The recommendations below represent reforms that national and local governments, representatives of civil society organizations, and others can consider for their action plans and the [Open Gov Challenge](#). The reforms are categorized according to OGP's principal values: transparency, civic participation, and public accountability. Reforms should be adapted to fit the domestic context, and involve and coordinate with other levels and branches of government.

Reforms across policy areas are also tagged by the estimated degree of difficulty in implementation. Though progress is often not linear, the recommendations have been categorized using these labels to give the reader a sense of how different reforms can work together to raise the ambition of open government approaches.

- **Foundational:** This tag is used for reforms that are the essential building blocks of a policy area. "Foundational" does not mean low ambition or low impact. These recommendations often establish basic legal and institutional structures.
- **Intermediate:** This tag is used for reforms that are more complex and often involve more coordination and outreach, such as with the public, between branches, agencies, and levels of government, or between countries.
- **Advanced:** This tag is used for reforms that close important loopholes to make existing work more effective and impactful. They are often about linking multiple databases or ensuring that oversight authorities can receive complaints from members of the public.

### FOUNDATIONS

- Create a legal framework on asset disclosure:** Establish or strengthen laws or regulations on asset and interest disclosure, which should include: what information can be made public, who must disclose their assets and interests, and the scope of assets and interests to be disclosed. A law should also mandate an institution or agency to collect and publish the data.
  - Require disclosure first from the most senior-level officials, elected officials, and members of the judiciary. As capacity allows, apply regulations to more public officials who hold high-risk positions and their close family members. (See [Section 5](#), Table 1, in the Australia Public Service Values and Code of Conduct for an example of a systematic description of high-risk positions.)
  - Broaden requirements to include disclosure of the asset and interest types at most risk for corrupt activity (such as financial, moveable and non-moveable, and in-kind benefits), as well as liabilities and conflicts of interest. This should include disclosure of board memberships, secondary employment, shareholder interests, and beneficial ownership of any assets at home or abroad.
  - Increase the regularity of submissions. Require officials to disclose conflicts of interest as they arise rather than only at set intervals.

Transparency

Legislature

Foundational

## ASSET AND INTEREST DISCLOSURE

- Create an oversight body:** Create an oversight body with investigative and sanctioning powers to verify asset and interest disclosure data, enforce regulations, and/or receive complaints from the public.
  - There are different models for this. In some countries, such as [Paraguay](#), the supreme audit institution is legally responsible for monitoring and verifying submissions. Other countries may assign relevant anti-corruption bodies to take on the oversight role, like in [Ukraine](#) and [Indonesia](#).
- Require reporting from the oversight body:** Require the oversight body to regularly report to the legislature and public on fulfilling the asset and interest disclosure requirements.
- Collect and verify data:** Verify submitted information using a risk-based approach. To do so, the oversight body's mandate must include the legal right to access other government records and private sector information for verification purposes.
  - Create channels of cooperation between the agency in charge of collecting and verifying data and relevant agencies, such as tax authorities or financial intelligence units that can assist with verification.
  - Use globally or regionally interoperable unique identifiers for data to enable better data sharing internationally and strengthen channels of cooperation and data sharing with other countries.

Public Accountability

Legislature

Foundational

Public Accountability

Legislature

Intermediate

Public Accountability

Executive

Legislature

Intermediate

## TRANSPARENCY

- Publish asset and interest disclosure data:** Require the publication of asset and interest disclosure data for monitoring by civil society, journalists, and other interested members of the public. Data should be free, machine-readable, and available in bulk download.
  - Publish as much information as possible. Protect sensitive information only when necessary and explain why such data cannot be made public.
  - Conduct outreach and training to increase the capacity of public officials and non-state actors to understand and use asset and interest disclosure data.
- Update data regularly:** Ensure data is updated regularly, and make historical data available to allow monitoring for changes over time.
- Centralize data:** Create one online system to streamline submission of asset and interest disclosure data, and ensure system administrators are well-equipped to assist those submitting information, such as in [Ukraine](#).

Transparency

Civic Participation

Legislature

Intermediate

Transparency

Executive

Intermediate

Transparency

Executive

Intermediate

## ASSET AND INTEREST DISCLOSURE

- Make data interoperable:** Make asset and interest disclosure data interoperable with other datasets, including data on [lobbying](#), political finance, land ownership, [beneficial ownership](#), and [public procurement](#) to ensure oversight mechanisms can cross-check data.
  - Create unique identifiers for individuals who submit declarations that can be used across datasets.
  - Consider introducing automatic red-flagging on conflicts of interest for high-risk areas such as public procurement, like in Romania's [PREVENT system](#).
- Accelerate right to information responses:** Provide timely and adequate responses for verification of specific information when journalists or members of the public request additional information to which they are [legally entitled](#).

Transparency  
Public Accountability  
Executive  
Advanced

Transparency  
Executive  
Advanced

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

- Create an enforcement mechanism:** Establish and enforce penalties or sanctions for non-compliant public officials, for non-submission or the submission of false or incomplete information.
  - Penalties should be proportionate to the level of offense, including consequences for non-compliance and falsification of information. For example, a judicial vetting process in [Albania](#), which included an assessment of asset disclosures, led to the dismissal or resignation of over 100 magistrates between 2017 and 2020 due to misconduct.
- Create a complaint mechanism:** Create a complaint mechanism for the media, civil society, or interested members of the public to request verification of certain information. The government body responsible for the information should investigate and respond to all requests in a timely manner.
- Publish compliance and enforcement history:** Publish data on compliance rates, false submissions, and the sanctions given for false submissions.

Public Accountability  
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### Examples of Reforms from OGP and Beyond

The following examples are commitments previously made within or beyond OGP that demonstrate elements of the recommendations made above. One of the eligibility criteria to join OGP is to mandate the collection of asset disclosure data. OGP members can focus on publishing asset and interest disclosure data and improving the quality of datasets, which often do not cover family members and are not published in machine-readable or bulk downloadable formats.

- **Croatia Legal and Institutional Frameworks for Anti-Corruption:** [Committed](#) to improving the frameworks to prevent corruption, such as by setting priorities to better manage conflicts of interest and tackle corruption in the public procurement system.
- **Côte d'Ivoire Legal Framework for Public Asset Disclosure:** [Committed](#) to updating its official asset declaration law and [improving](#) the online publication of assets data.
- **Georgia Independent Monitoring of Asset Disclosure:** [Created](#) an independent monitoring system to [verify](#) the completeness and accuracy of asset disclosures by public officials, with full public access to comprehensive information on their disclosures.
- **Senegal System to Forward False Asset Disclosures to Court:** [Committed](#) to creating a system to ensure that courts can receive cases of false filings.
- **Ukraine Online Asset Disclosure Submissions:** [Created](#) a unified, online asset declaration platform, including data on income, property, beneficial ownership, and spending in 2016, which allowed the public to inspect officials' asset declarations and report any irregularities. (Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the platform has been closed.)

### BEYOND OGP ACTION PLANS

- **Lithuania Platform to Monitor Conflicts of Interest:** [Created](#) an [online system](#) (PINREG) for ethics officials to monitor conflicts of interest, which includes automated reminders for public officials to file their interests and make corrections. Also committed to connecting PINREG to a judicial platform to identify conflicts of interest when assigning court cases.
- **Paraguay Platform to Monitor Unexplained Wealth:** Created an [open data platform](#) that includes asset disclosures, which the public has used to uncover extreme wealth among high-ranking officials.



## The Role of Local Governments

Local governments need equally stringent ethical controls as national governments, including asset and interest disclosure requirements. For example, the mayor of [Los Angeles](#) (United States) hired the city's first-ever ethics officer in 2023. The ethics officer has since created a more robust vetting process for potential commissioners and employees in the mayor's office, such as conducting a more extensive review for conflicts of interest. The Brookings Institution worked closely with the mayor's office to develop this role. The city is part of Brookings' [Sustainable Development Goals Leadership Cities Network](#), which works at the municipal level to support sustainable development.

## Active OGP Partners

The following organizations have recently worked on this issue in the context of OGP at the national or international level. They may have additional insights on the topic. Please note that this list is not exhaustive. If you are interested in national-level initiatives, please contact [research@opengovpartnership.org](mailto:research@opengovpartnership.org).

- [Brookings Institution](#)
  - [Local Leadership on the Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Transparency International](#)
- [UN Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#)
- [UN Development Programme](#)
- [World Bank](#)
  - [Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative](#), a joint initiative with the UNODC

## Benchmarking Data

The [OGP 2023-2028 Strategy](#) sets out the [Open Gov Challenge](#) and aims to provide clear benchmarks for performance through reliable data.

While benchmarks for individual countries and *Open Gov Guide* recommendations are not yet integrated, for this chapter, interested individuals may rely on the following data sets:

- **International IDEA** has a [political finance database](#), which includes data related to asset and interest disclosure as well as political contributions.
- In collaboration with the **OGP Support Unit** and **Transparency International**, the **Data for Development Network's** Global Data Barometer collects information on whether company beneficial ownership is available in open formats. Visualizations of this data are available on the [OGP website](#).
- OGP commitments on this topic can be found on the [Data Dashboard](#).

## Guidance and Standards

While the list below is not exhaustive, it aims to provide a range of recommendations, standards, and analysis to guide reform in this policy area.

- The 2022 **OGP Support Unit** report [Broken Links: Open Data to Advance Accountability and Combat Corruption](#) includes a chapter on asset disclosure data and the need for interoperability with other key political data.
- **Transparency International** has several resources, such as a [general overview](#) of the role asset disclosure plays in anti-corruption, a [report](#) on open data for political integrity in Europe (including asset disclosure), a discussion of potential [oversight mechanisms](#), and [recommendations](#) for how OGP members can incorporate asset disclosure in their OGP action plans.
- The **World Bank** has several resources on asset disclosure, including an [analysis](#) of the benefits and challenges of electronic filing, detailed [case studies](#) of asset disclosure frameworks around the world, [recommendations](#) on how asset disclosure can be used to identify politically exposed persons, and an [analysis](#) of how to design an effective asset disclosure mechanism.
- The **World Bank** and the **UN Office on Drugs and Crime** collaborate on a joint venture, the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative. The initiative provides [resources](#) on the process to recover these assets, country-specific [guidance](#), and other information related to detecting corruption, such as an analysis of beneficial ownership data and a [technical guide](#) on designing an effective disclosure form.
- The **UNCAC Coalition** (the Association for the Implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption) published a [briefing note](#) with guidance on asset and interest disclosure, including conflicts of interest.
- The **G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group** has published [high-level principles](#) on asset disclosure.
- The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** has an official [recommendation](#) on avoiding conflict of interest in the public service.
- The **Organization of American States** created a [model law](#) for asset declarations that reflects international standards.
- [Recommendations 12 and 22](#) from the **Financial Action Task Force** include standards for preventing and detecting fraud and corruption by politically exposed persons, including asset disclosure mechanisms.