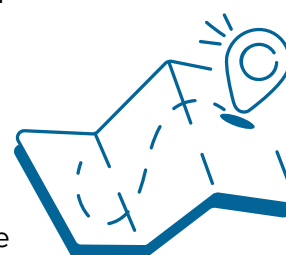




10 Engaging Other Levels and Branches of Government

Key Takeaways

- The OGP Action Framework acknowledges that engaging diverse branches and levels of government is key to achieving open government reforms and mainstreaming open government principles.
- Local governments, parliaments, judiciary branch institutions, and national autonomous institutions all have unique and important roles to play in advancing open government.
- OGP has developed guidance for all four groups to be able to engage with OGP.
- OGP encourages all four groups to engage with the national OGP action plan process, where they must adhere to the relevant OGP rules, requirements, and standards.
- Local governments can also participate in OGP through [OGP Local](#), a dedicated program for subnational governments.
- Parliaments, judiciary branch institutions and national autonomous institutions can also participate via standalone action plans in specific cases.
- All four groups from OGP member countries are eligible to submit commitments to the Open Gov Challenge.



While national action plans remain a core aspect of OGP participation, the OGP Action Framework acknowledges that engaging diverse branches and levels of government is key to achieving open government reforms and mainstreaming open government principles. This engagement is necessary for checks and balances between branches of government.

10.1 Local Governments

Local governments play a crucial role in tackling global challenges by being directly responsible for policies and services that have tangible impacts on citizens' lives. They serve as hubs for governance innovation and are often at the forefront of addressing these issues. Most importantly, local governments can function as “laboratories for innovation” where they can pilot and refine open government initiatives that can then be scaled up to the national level. National governments rely on local counterparts for effective policy implementation and to address common challenges. In turn, local entities benefit when national frameworks promote collaboration, support innovation, and assure credible implementation.

Given the importance of local governments in advancing open government, OGP offers a dedicated membership tier for local governments as a primary means of engagement. At the same time, local governments can also engage with OGP in two other ways: by engaging in the national OGP process or by joining the Open Gov Challenge.

10.1.1 OGP MEMBERSHIP AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Local governments can participate in OGP through [OGP Local](#), a dedicated program for subnational governments. OGP Local members develop and implement action plans in collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders, similar to national governments, following the [OGP Local Handbook](#). These action plans are not assessed by the IRM. The IRM's biennial Local Report identifies lessons learned, success stories, and innovative approaches to local open government across OGP.

More information on OGP Local can be found [here](#).

10.1.2 INCLUDING LOCAL COMMITMENTS IN THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

OGP encourages strategic, national-local collaboration to promote reforms across levels of government, including through the national OGP action plan process.

Local level commitments that are included within a national action plan should do the following.

- Be co-created between government and civil society as part of the action plan development process.
- Have a local scope but derive from national policies or a nationally-led program. To ensure the national action plan remains strategic as well as manageable in its implementation and assessment, it is suggested that commitments that involve local jurisdictions (are implemented by local governments) meet the following objectives:
 - Help implement a state-wide open government policy, since some countries adopt open state strategies that span institutions and government levels and require coordination across these levels.

- Advance local implementation of national policies when local jurisdictions must observe national regulations. This is especially useful when co-created with local government and civil society.
- Expand awareness of open government in local contexts, such as by incorporating knowledge-sharing activities or creating networks to exchange experiences and innovations among national and local governments and civil society.
- Highlight local-level open government innovations by including ambitious initiatives with strong impact potential that can be adapted by other jurisdictions.
- Commitments included in the national action plan must be regularly monitored by the MSF, with progress reported in the repository at least twice every year in line with OGP Standards and minimum requirements.
- If commitments in the action plan are implemented by local jurisdictions who are a member of OGP Local, they must not be duplicated in OGP local action plans.

For commitments that do not follow the above considerations, it is suggested that these activities are included in the action plan by including them in a section as “Additional Local Open Government Initiatives.” These initiatives would not be considered as formal commitments and hence would not be evaluated by the IRM individually. However, if included in the action plan, the IRM would refer to the “Additional Local Open Government Initiatives” in its assessments as a whole and provide general highlights on the characteristics and objectives of the initiatives, as well as the relevance to the action plan and OGP process.

More information on national-local collaboration and different approaches and design choices for collaboration is available in the publication “[Progress through Partnership: National-Local Collaboration to Advance Open Government](#).”

10.1.3 PARTICIPATION IN THE OPEN GOV CHALLENGE

Local governments that have joined OGP Local, as well as those in OGP member countries that have not, may submit commitments to the Open Gov Challenge, regardless of whether they coordinate with the national OGP process. More information is available on the [Open Gov Challenge](#) page.

10.2 Parliaments

Parliaments play a key role in advancing open government by introducing, reviewing, and ratifying legislation or approving budgets for reforms. They provide oversight by holding the executive accountable and making their own oversight processes transparent. Parliaments can also adopt open government principles in their institutional practices and foster cross-party dialogue to support and institutionalize reforms.

Parliamentary engagement has been integral to the open government philosophy since OGP's inception, as many aspirations of the movement, like institutionalizing reforms, promoting civic space, and defending democratic processes, require parliamentary support. Parliaments also play a key role in setting agendas and creating space for open government reforms.

Parliamentary engagement is strongly recommended, especially where it can advance major open government reforms, but it is not an OGP requirement for participation. There are three primary models for parliamentary engagement outlined in the [Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement](#) (the Memorandum), two of which are relevant for how Parliaments can participate in OGP: participation in the national OGP process and standalone action plans. Additionally, Parliaments may engage in other activities to promote openness, such as the Open Gov Challenge.

10.2.1 PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL OGP PROCESS

[Evidence shows](#) that direct participation in the national or local OGP process and action plans allows parliaments to better explore potential synergies and play a more significant role in advancing broader open government reforms. Parliaments in OGP countries are therefore encouraged to explore ways to directly participate in their national process. The [Memorandum](#) outlines the conditions that apply to the participation of parliaments in the national OGP process and the support offered to parliaments and other stakeholders by the Support Unit. Key elements include the following.

- Parliaments choosing to engage in the national OGP process commit to adhering to the [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#), as well as any rules established by the relevant MSF.
- Parliamentary commitments must be integrated into the overall action plan and adhere to the established start and end dates.
- Reporting and monitoring mechanisms apply equally to parliamentary commitments, which are also subject to IRM assessments. The IRM focuses on evaluating the overall country co-creation process.

In addition to the Memorandum, the OGP Support Unit offers the [Menu of Options](#), which captures the approaches taken by a growing number of OGP members, illustrating how parliaments can participate in OGP and help advance the co-creation and implementation of open government reforms.

10.2.2 PARTICIPATION VIA STANDALONE OPEN PARLIAMENT PLANS

OGP parliamentary action plans can be developed independently from OGP national action plans only to provide a stepping stone for parliaments whose direct participation in the national OGP process is not (yet) feasible, or in addition to their participation in the OGP national plans where this is considered desirable by parliamentary stakeholders. If a parliament chooses to develop a standalone [Open Parliament Plan](#) through a standalone process, it must follow the [OGP Parliamentary Action Plan Guidance](#), which specifies procedural arrangements, minimum requirements, guidance, and templates for the co-creation and implementation of OGP parliamentary action plans. Key elements of this guidance include the following.

- **Eligibility and process.** Explains how parliaments from active OGP member countries can initiate and submit standalone OGP parliamentary action plans.
- **Minimum requirements.** Outlines key criteria for participation, including official notification to OGP, appointment of a Parliament Liaison, public input and feedback requirements, and timely submission of assessment reports.
- **Roles and responsibilities.** Details the key actors involved in the parliamentary action plan process and their responsibilities in coordination, implementation, and oversight.
- **Guidance and tools.** Provides resources for co-creation, implementation, reporting, and assessment, including templates for action plans and commitments.

10.2.3 PARTICIPATION IN THE OPEN GOV CHALLENGE

Parliaments of member countries are eligible to use the Open Gov Challenge to submit individual commitments. More information is available on the [Open Gov Challenge](#) page.

10.3 Judiciary Branch Institutions

Judiciary Branch Institutions (JBI) can contribute to open government by providing guidance on legal issues related to proposed commitments, engaging in measures related to strengthening judicial openness, access to justice and the integrity of judicial bodies, and enforcing open government practices through redress or complaint mechanisms. The [Participation of Judiciary Branch Institutions in OGP](#) outlines three avenues for participation in OGP.

10.3.1 PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL OGP PROCESS

This is the preferred option and the model most frequently pursued by countries with JBI involvement in OGP. Participation by JBI in the national process offers OGP stakeholders critical opportunities to explore open government synergies across branches of government. A single national process also allows more efficient use of the time and resources allocated to co-creation and consultation, and reduces the transaction costs for civil society in engaging in OGP-related activities.

JBI representatives must adhere to the [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#) and the rules established by the respective MSF. This includes adhering to established start and end dates for OGP action plans, adhering to all regular reporting and monitoring mechanisms, and assessment by the IRM.

10.3.2 PARTICIPATION VIA STANDALONE OGP PLANS

This option is available when legal, political, or practical reasons favour an independent plan. They offer an opportunity to co-create with civil society and deliver on commitments that further open up their processes and systems, doing so in a way that is fully aligned with their own calendars and strategic objectives.

It is limited to the highest-ranking national-level judiciary branch representatives, such as the Supreme Court or High Level Judicial Courts or Councils that have the authority to establish or oversee rulings, standards, and procedures at the national level. JBI considering this option should shape their OGP processes following the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards (especially Standards 3, 4 and 5).

10.3.3 PARTICIPATION IN THE OPEN GOV CHALLENGE

JI of member countries are eligible to use the Open Gov Challenge to submit individual commitments. More information is available on the [Open Gov Challenge](#) page.

10.4 National Autonomous Institutions

National autonomous institutions (NAI), such as Supreme Audit Institutions or Ombudsmen, can contribute to open government by providing independent oversight, fostering transparency and accountability within their mandates, and supporting commitments that align with their institutional responsibilities. [Participation of National Autonomous Institutions in OGP](#) outlines three avenues for participation in OGP.

10.4.1 PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL OGP PROCESS

This is the preferred option and the model most frequently pursued by countries with NAI involvement in OGP. Participation by NAI in the national process offers OGP stakeholders critical opportunities to explore open government synergies across branches of government. A single national process also allows more efficient use of the time and resources allocated to co-creation and consultation, and reduces the transaction costs for civil society in engaging in OGP-related activities.

NAI representatives must adhere to the [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#) and the rules established by the respective MSF. This includes adhering to established start and end dates for OGP action plans, all regular reporting and monitoring mechanisms, and assessment by the IRM.

10.4.2 PARTICIPATION VIA STANDALONE OGP PLANS

This option is available when legal, political, or practical reasons favour an independent plan. They offer an opportunity to co-create with civil society and deliver on commitments that further open up their processes and systems, doing so in a way that is fully aligned with their own calendars and strategic objectives.

It is limited to constitutionally/institutionally established national organisms that are not part of the executive branch. NAI considering this option should shape their OGP processes following the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards (especially Standards 3, 4 and 5).

10.4.3 PARTICIPATION IN THE OPEN GOV CHALLENGE

NAI of member countries are eligible to use the Open Gov Challenge to submit individual commitments. More information is available on the [Open Gov Challenge](#) page.