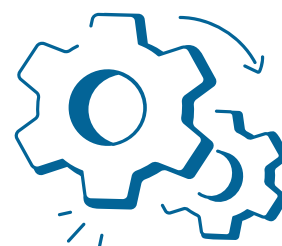# 1 Foundations for Open Government

Key Takeaways

- OGP is built on the principles of transparency, citizen participation, and public accountability.

- OGP's vision is open governments working in partnership with civil society and people to strengthen democracy and deliver better societal outcomes.

- OGP's mission is to inspire, connect, and enable an ever-growing community of reformers and champions from government and civil society to take action together.

- OGP operates with an unique, inclusive, and flexible model.

- OGP is currently implementing its 2023-2028 Strategy, which was developed through a consultative process.

1.1   Founding Principles

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) was formed in 2011 by governments and civil society organizations, based on the idea that an open government is more accessible, more responsive, and more accountable to citizens, and that improving the relationship between people and their government has long-term benefits for everyone. Since 2011, OGP has grown into a global effort, bringing together dozens of countries, over a hundred local jurisdictions, and thousands of civil society organizations working together to advance open government.

- **Vision.** Open governments working in partnership with civil society and people to strengthen democracy and deliver better societal outcomes.

- **Mission.** Inspire, connect, and enable an ever-growing community of reformers and champions from government and civil society to take action together.

At its core, OGP is built upon the principles of transparency, citizen participation, and public accountability.

Transparency

It occurs when "government-held information (including on activities and decisions) is open, comprehensive, timely, freely available to the public, and meets basic open data standards (e.g. raw data, machine readability) where formats allow."

Transparency empowers citizens to exercise their rights, hold the government accountable, and participate in decision-making processes.

EXAMPLES

- Strengthened implementation of access to information and/or open data laws
- The proactive or reactive publication of government-held information
- Public registers containing beneficial ownership, government contracts, or lobbying organizations
- Disclosing information using open data standards
- Legal or institutional frameworks to strengthen the right to information

Citizen Participation

It occurs when "governments seek to mobilize citizens to engage in public debate, provide input, and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative and effective governance."

When citizens are engaged, governments are more responsive, innovative, and effective.

EXAMPLES

- New or improved processes and mechanisms for the public to influence decisions
- Participatory mechanisms for underrepresented groups
- Legal environment that guarantees civil and political rights
- Strengthened formal democratic processes (including elections, petitions, and citizen proposals)
- Mechanisms enabling civil society to assess and transparently manage public funding
- Improved access to remedies for violations of the freedom of expression, assembly, or association

Public Accountability

It occurs when "rules, regulations, and mechanisms in place 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."

Importantly, public accountability implies that members of the public can access and trigger accountability mechanisms, meaning they are not solely internal.

EXAMPLES

- Citizen audits of performance as well as new or improved citizen-initiated appeals processes
- Improved access to justice through cheaper, faster, or easier-to-use justice mechanisms
- Participatory auditing mechanisms for key government services or infrastructure
- Strengthened whistleblower protections
- Transparency and accountability systems in government lobbying (including public lobbying registers, published meeting records, and citizen reporting channels)
- Participatory auditing mechanisms for key government services or infrastructure

In addition, OGP also recognizes the importance of other cross-cutting supporting elements that enhance the implementation of these core principles.

- **Inclusion:** Governments should serve everyone, especially those who have been historically marginalized, like people with disabilities, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, minorities, indigenous communities, and those with fewer resources.

- **Innovation and technology:** Governments should seek to embrace the importance of providing citizens with open access to technology, the role of new technologies in driving innovation, and increasing the capacity of citizens to use technology.

OGP members commit to upholding these principles by endorsing the Open Government Declaration upon joining the Partnership (see Joining OGP).

1.2   The OGP Model

The OGP model is centered on dialogue, action, accountability and learning.

Dialogue. Government actors from all levels and branches, as well as thousands of civil society organizations, work together to co-create and implement open government reforms or commitments in a number of ways (see Development of Action Plans and Commitments) and across a broad range of issues, such as anti-corruption, civic space, digital governance, inclusion, and public service delivery, to name a few.

Action. OGP provides a flexible framework that allows countries to advance their own open government priorities through dialogue and collaboration between government, civil society and other stakeholders. The flexibility stems from the acknowledgement that countries have different starting points and have unique contexts, so they can identify and design reforms that fit national realities while being encouraged to pursue ambitious reforms and improvements.

Accountability and learning. The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) is OGP's accountability arm, publishing evidence-based reviews on progress and challenges. Peer exchanges and regular assessments give members the opportunity to share lessons, refine commitments, and advance more effective reforms.

This unique model ensures that civil society organizations and/or direct citizen engagement has a role in shaping and overseeing open government work. Collectively, thousands of commitments have been made globally since 2011.

What Makes the OGP Model Unique?

Equal Partnership
The OGP model is built on meaningful collaboration between governments and civil society to deliver better outcomes. Governments provide high-level political leadership and public officials committed to ambitious reforms, while civil society works as an equal partner in setting priorities, co-creating actions, and monitoring outcomes. This co-leadership approach is reflected both nationally and globally, with governance structures that include government and civil society co-chairs.

Action with Built-in Accountability
OGP is a platform for action where all members make and implement concrete open government commitments, which are then monitored by the IRM and other monitoring bodies. These plans help drive progress on national priorities and can serve as an engine for the implementation of global pledges, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), G7 commitments, and others. Accountability is ensured through OGP's IRM, which tracks and evaluates progress. Structured learning processes such as peer exchanges and regular assessments further support continuous improvement of commitments.

Country Ownership
OGP empowers countries and local jurisdictions to set their own agendas and policy priorities. Through national and local dialogues, stakeholders identify key areas for reform. The model is flexible by recognizing diverse starting points while encouraging members to aim high and achieve meaningful changes tailored to their context.

Global Community
OGP provides a global platform for inspiration, peer learning, and support to advance open government reforms. Members gain access to leading experts and partners (both technical and financial) across key policy areas and can participate in multi-sector coalitions. They increase their visibility through OGP communications, awards, and storytelling initiatives that highlight impactful reforms. Additionally, members have the opportunity to connect by participating in OGP global and regional events like OGP Summits, regional meetings, Open Gov Week, and others.

Throughout their journey, the OGP Support Unit and the IRM provide support to its members, helping them achieve their open government goals and maximize the value of their participation in OGP. See Key OGP Actors for more information on the Support Unit and IRM.

1.3   OGP's 2023-2028 Strategy

OGP is currently implementing its 2023–2028 Strategy, which was developed with contributions from over 1,000 individuals, groups, networks, OGP members, and multi-stakeholder fora. The result is a renewed vision for OGP as a more political, values-based partnership rooted in specific actions, innovations, and ideas for more open and democratic governments that meet citizens' expectations.

OGP's 2023–2028 Strategy outlines a plan to further this goal by focusing on five key areas.

- **Building a strong community.** OGP will focus on growing a global network of reformers, providing them with the tools and connections they need to champion open government.

- **Making open government central to how governments work.** OGP wants to see open government principles integrated into all levels and branches of government, becoming a standard part of policy-making and public service delivery.

- **Protecting and expanding civic space.** Recognizing that open government can only thrive when citizens have the freedom to participate in public life, OGP will work to protect and expand the space for civil society to operate freely and safely.

- **Accelerating progress on open government reforms.** OGP will launch a Partnership-wide challenge focusing on ten key policy areas, encouraging all members to make tangible progress in areas like tackling corruption, using digital technologies responsibly, and taking action on climate change.

- **Becoming a hub for inspiration and learning.** OGP will become a central resource for sharing innovative ideas, evidence of successful reforms, and inspiring stories from reformers around the world.

Learn more about OGP's 2023-2028 Strategy here.