

CIVIC SPACE LAB LEADERS' GROUP



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LAB

Championing Civic Freedoms Globally

The Leaders' Group is an exclusive platform for governments with proven track records in civic space protection. It helps develop strategic approaches to strengthen civic freedoms, democratic participation, and civil society resilience—ultimately ensuring democracy's long-term health and sustainability.

In today's rapidly changing technological and geopolitical landscape, vibrant civic space provides the foundation that enables democracies to adapt, renew legitimacy, reduce polarisation, and deliver for citizens. As democracy faces unprecedented challenges globally, your government's leadership is more valuable than ever.

Why Your Government Should Join

- **Transform ambitions into practice** – Implement reforms to address vulnerabilities in your domestic civic space ecosystem and safeguard democracy into the future.
- **Shape Global Best Practices** – Influence international standards and frameworks for civic space protection.
- **Access Peer Exchange** – Connect directly with other leading democracies to share strategies and solutions.
- **Receive Implementation Support** – Get expert assistance developing comprehensive civic space strategies tailored to your context.
- **Gain International Recognition** – Showcase your democratic innovations and be recognised as a global leader.

What Membership Involves

- Quarterly virtual meetings (2-3 hours) and one annual in-person gathering.
- Participation in thematic working groups addressing civil society sustainability, civic space tensions, and external threats.
- Access to the OGP network of peer reformers, civil society leaders and multilateral actors.
- No membership fees – only cover participation costs for in-person meetings.

Who Should Participate

Senior officials leading civic space reforms, including ministers responsible for civil society engagement, democratic reform leaders, and policy experts in transparency and accountability.

Ready to lead on civic space promotion and protection? Contact the OGP Support Unit today to begin your government's journey with the Leaders' Group.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Civic Space Lab Leaders' Group?

The Leaders' Group is an exclusive platform within the Civic Space Lab initiative designed for governments with positive civic space track records. It provides a collaborative environment where government champions can develop strategic approaches to strengthen civic freedoms, democratic participation, and civil society resilience—ultimately ensuring democracy's long-term health and sustainability.

Why should my government join the Leaders' Group?

Joining the Leaders' Group offers multiple benefits:

- Opportunity to shape global best practices on civic space protection.
- Access to peer exchange with other leading democracies, civil society experts and multilateral actors.
- Support in developing comprehensive civic space strategies.
- International recognition as a democratic leader.
- A platform to showcase your government's democratic innovations.

What qualifies a government to join the Leaders' Group?

The Leaders' Group is open to governments that:

- Demonstrate a positive track record on protecting civic freedoms.
- Have a solid civic space legal and policy framework.
- Show commitment to strengthening civic space and democratic participation through identifying specific reforms and initiatives to be designed/implemented with the Lab.
- Are willing to share experiences and learn from international best practices.
- Are open to serving as regional or global exemplars in civic space protection.

What specific activities does the Leaders' Group undertake?

The Group activities include:

- Regular peer exchange sessions on best practices and challenges.
- Collaborative development of policy recommendations.
- Support for country-specific civic space strategies.
- Thematic workshops on priority areas such as civil society sustainability.
- Development of shared frameworks and principles.
- Constructive feedback mechanisms for civic space initiatives.

What is the time commitment required for participation?

While the Group is flexible to accommodate different government capacities, meaningful participation typically involves:

- Quarterly virtual meetings (2-3 hours each).
- One annual in-person gathering (1-2 days).
- Participation in at least one thematic working group.
- Commitment to implementing agreed action points within your administration.



Who from our government should participate?

The Leaders' Group is designed for senior government officials with responsibility for civic space reforms, such as ministers or senior officials responsible for leading:

- Civil society engagement and/or development initiatives.
- Democratic reform initiatives.
- Open government policy coordination.

We recommend designating both a political lead and a technical point of contact to ensure continuity.

How does the Group address different national contexts and priorities?

Leaders' Group recognises that each country faces unique challenges and operates within distinct political realities. The Group:

- Emphasises adaptable frameworks rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.
- Allows members to focus on priority themes most relevant to their context.
- Provides tailored support for country-specific strategies
- Values diverse approaches to shared democratic principles



Who else is involved in the Leaders' Group

The Leaders Group is supported by partner organisations, including UNDP, OECD, EU Fundamental Rights Agency, International Center for Not-for-profit Law (ICNL), European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), Civicus, and People Powered.

What is the relationship between the Leaders' Group and civil society?

While the Group is government-focused, it operates with the understanding that effective civic space protection requires partnership with civil society.

The Group:

- Incorporates advisory input from civil society representatives and international experts.
- Encourages governments to engage domestic civil society in developing strategies.
- Creates opportunities for structured dialogue between governments and civil society organisations.
- Promotes models of meaningful civil society participation in policy development.

What costs are associated with membership?

There is no membership fee to join the Leaders' Group. Governments are expected to cover the costs of their representatives' participation in in-person meetings. Limited support may be available for representatives from lower-income countries.

How can my government apply to join?

Interested governments should:

- Contact the OGP Support Unit to express interest.
- Complete a brief application outlining civic space achievements and priorities.
- Designate senior representatives to participate in Group activities.
- Commit to the Group principles of openness, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

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