

# OGP NATIONAL HANDBOOK

Rules + Guidance  
for Participants

Open  
Government  
Partnership



# OGP National Handbook

## Rules and Guidance for Participants

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# Introduction

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is based on the idea that an open government is more transparent, inclusive, participatory, and accountable to citizens and that improving the relationship between people and their government has long-term benefits for everyone. Collaboration between government, civil society, and other stakeholders (e.g., citizens, local governments, parliament, academics, private sector, etc.) is at the heart of the OGP process.

**Research based on OGP data over the last ten years shows** that a strong and inclusive co-creation process leads to well-designed and more ambitious commitments. **Research also shows** that stronger results are achieved when collaboration continues through the implementation of reforms. Public participation improves the quality of public services when everyone can speak and officials consider and respond to these views.

The OGP National Handbook was designed to help reformers in government and civil society navigate the OGP process. It includes guidance, examples, best practices, templates, and information on minimum requirements of all the key moments in a country's participation in OGP. All content has been updated to reflect the new OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards (see Box 1) which were designed to ensure that the rules are light touch and flexible, and lead to greater action plan ambition, inclusion, and relevance. Ultimately, the intent is to equip reformers with better guidance on how to use OGP to respond to their country's most pressing societal challenges.

This handbook consists of seven parts. **Section 1** discusses the roles and responsibilities of key actors in the open government process. **Section 2** details the requirements in co-creation, while **Section 3** outlines action plan rules and required templates in co-creation. **Section 4** focuses on implementation of the action plan, and **Section 5** describes accountability processes and information provision. **Section 6** provides guidance on other actors in open government beyond the executive department, more specifically the judiciary and local governments. Finally, **Section 7** provides the minimum participation requirements and guidance for when countries are considered acting contrary to process.

## Box 1. OGP Participation and Co-creation Standards (2021)

<b>Standard 1</b>	Establishing a space for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between government, civil society, and other non-governmental stakeholders.
<b>Standard 2</b>	Providing open, accessible and timely information about activities and progress within a member's participation in OGP.
<b>Standard 3</b>	Providing inclusive and informed opportunities for public participation during co-creation of the action plan.
<b>Standard 4</b>	Providing a reasoned response and ensuring ongoing dialogue between government and civil society and other non-governmental stakeholders as appropriate during co-creation of the action plan.
<b>Standard 5</b>	Providing inclusive and informed opportunities for ongoing dialogue and collaboration during implementation and monitoring of the action plan.

# 1. Roles and Responsibilities: Key Actors and Stakeholders in Open Government Partnership

OGP is a broad partnership that includes members at the national and local level and thousands of civil society organizations. This unique model ensures that civil society organizations and other stakeholders have a role in shaping and overseeing governments.

- **Governments** are indispensable actors in the OGP process. Governments commit to upholding the principles of open and transparent government by endorsing the [Open Government Declaration](#).

Each government identifies a **lead ministry** or **government agency** that will assume the responsibility for coordinating the government's OGP process and activities and serve as the official contact point for the Partnership. The lead ministry or agency would ideally have oversight of matters related to good governance and the ability to coordinate across ministries or government agencies in open government matters.

The head of the chosen ministry or agency will be the ministerial-level point of contact for OGP. The government must also appoint a working-level Point of Contact (POC). This person will be responsible for coordinating a participating government's domestic and international OGP activities. The role is crucial and multidimensional, as POCs are at the forefront of open government efforts in an OGP country – engaging and convening stakeholders on a regular basis and coordinating OGP initiatives to promote transparency, participation, and accountability.

The primary responsibilities and activities for the OGP Point of Contact include:

- **Stakeholder engagement:** Work with civil society and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis. This engagement includes the development and management of a multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) in cooperation with civil society (see section 1.2), per OGP's Participation and Co-Creation Standards.
- **OGP Support Unit engagement:** Work with the OGP Support Unit to assist in the action plan development process, assessing all available resources and identifying international best practices for potential local application.
- **Government coordination:** Work with other government agencies involved in relevant issues that emerge during the co-creation and implementation process.
- **Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) engagement:** Activities include:
  - Communicating with the IRM team and researchers, providing information and contacts to the IRM regarding OGP in the country, as well as providing comments during the review process of IRM reports.
  - Assisting and facilitating the use of IRM reports to identify and address areas for improvement and to encourage adoption of IRM recommendations with OGP stakeholders in the country.
  - Engaging with the IRM team and researchers in the uptake and dissemination of IRM findings, for example, participating in IRM events and collaborating to secure high-level participation. For more information on the IRM, please visit the [IRM page](#) on the OGP website or contact the team at: [irm@opengovpartnership.org](mailto:irm@opengovpartnership.org).

- **Global and regional OGP event participation:** This also requires informing senior government officials about OGP events and activities and facilitating their participation and encouraging high-level attendance at regional events and global summits.
- **Peer exchange activities participation:** Participation includes either providing support to colleagues or requesting opportunities for collaboration and learning.

Over the years, OGP participation has grown beyond the national executive branch, and some countries have included the legislative and judiciary branches and diverse autonomous bodies and local governments in OGP processes. Members are encouraged to engage these bodies in their OGP process (see [Section 6](#) for more information.)

- **Civil society organizations (CSO)** are indispensable actors in the OGP process. Governments are required to engage with civil society toward a clear and open process of participation. Civil society may include community groups, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, advocacy groups, labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations. CSOs are key partners in the design, implementation, and monitoring of OGP action plans; participation in multi-stakeholder mechanisms; and awareness-raising among citizens about OGP and its achievements.

Ongoing dialogue between government and civil society (and other stakeholders as appropriate) is a core element of OGP membership. This is critical to build relationships and trust, which can lead to increased sustainability and ability to overcome challenges. In this case, the role of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum or Platform is important.

- **Other actors** involved in the OGP process include: academia, the private sector, international organizations, and donors. They provide an enabling environment for open government processes to take root by providing technical assistance, expertise, financial resources, and support. In some cases, they also act as observers, monitors, and commentators, gauging the progress of open government initiatives in the country.

## 1.1. The Multi-Stakeholder Forum or Platform

The Multi-Stakeholder Forum or Platform<sup>1</sup> (MSF/P) is an established space for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between government and civil society and leads the open government processes within a country.

### 1.1.a. Responsibilities of the MSF/P

While early MSFs focused on developing action plans, today they oversee implementation and engage with relevant stakeholders to advance the open government process and communicate proactively about the progress of open government reforms in the country.

Key responsibilities of the MSF/P include:

- **Strategic and tactical planning.** Based on available resources, priorities within and outside the government, and the political context, the MSF/P strategizes on the best ways to approach the development, implementation, and monitoring of action plans. It ensures that open government directions or aims are established, strategic themes to be addressed in action plans and stakeholders are engaged in open government processes. As an established space, the MSF/P can also be used to respond to emerging priorities or opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> The platform can be an existing structure or platform, but what is important is it is consistent with what is discussed in Section 1.1.

- **Engagement.** The MSF/P proactively identifies ways to engage stakeholders from within and outside government on different open government processes within the country, including the development, implementation, and monitoring of the action plan. It also establishes avenues for other non-governmental stakeholders, such as academia and the private sector to engage with the OGP process. The MSF/P also provides opportunities for remote participation in some meetings and events to enable the inclusion of groups unable to attend in person.
- **Communication.** The MSF/P undertakes activities to inform open government stakeholders and the broader public about open government processes in the country and how they can participate. It also proactively communicates and reports back on its activities, decisions, and results to government and civil society stakeholders.
- **Oversight.** The MSF/P oversees domestic processes related to OGP and ensures the development, implementation, and monitoring of action plans. It assesses action plan development and implementation and identifies ways to approach these processes in future iterations. The MSF/P also coordinates cross-sector efforts towards openness beyond the action plan.

The MSF/P should develop mechanisms to coordinate and collaborate that include synchronous and asynchronous mechanisms. The meeting schedule should allow for coordination, particularly during busy moments in the OGP cycle, without becoming burdensome and unnecessarily bureaucratic. Rules on meeting frequency, membership, and decision-making processes should be published on the national OGP website.

### 1.1.b. MSF/P Composition

The MSF/platform comprises representatives from government and civil society. Its ultimate composition should consider the following:

- **Balance.** The MSF/P should ensure that no constituency, government, or civil society is over- or underrepresented. In consultation with civil society, the government point of contact defines and coordinates the participation of other government actors and other stakeholders in the MSF/P.
- **Inclusion.** The MSF/P should proactively include representatives of groups such as women, youth, seniors, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ and indigenous communities, or other historically underrepresented groups who may have different needs or insights critical to shaping proposed government reforms.
- **Diverse** – It may be useful that the MSF/P represents a diverse set of stakeholders and interests. Conducting a diversity assessment may be useful in determining which groups or interests have or do not have access or influence over the MSF/P.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1.c. Key Elements to Consider When Setting Up an MSF/P

While there is no required framework for setting up and establishing an MSF/P, the following can be considered during the process:

**Government participants.** It is important to have representatives from the ministries, departments, and/or agencies responsible for implementing open government policies, such as access to information agencies and e-government or telecommunications departments. It is also beneficial to include ministries with cross-government coordination capacity, like the cabinet secretariat or the ministry for budget and management. In the latter stages of the process, it is also useful to ensure the agencies that will implement the commitments included in the action plan are involved and communicate with the MSF/P.

<sup>2</sup> See Section 2 of Tool 1 in this [OGP Toolkit for More Gender-Responsive Action Plans](#).



**Civil society participants.** Civil society participants may select among themselves who will become members of the MSF/P. However, it is crucial that all civil society organizations are informed and given the space to participate in this process. A call for participation can be issued by an initial group of civil society organizations and circulated widely to invite both national and local civil society organizations. Those who express interest shall select among themselves who will become representatives to the MSF/P. While the self-selection process is OGP's recommended approach, governments can play a role as long as the process is transparent and has clear rules and criteria for selection, and the process is open to all civil society actors interested in participating.

**Other participants.** In a number of OGP countries, representatives from other government branches or other levels of government, academia, or the private sector are included in the MSF, given their potential contributions to the open government agenda in the country and roles they can play during co-creation and implementation. It is important that such representation does not replace the space for civil society participants in the forum.

**Size of the MSF/P.** The number of representatives from both government and civil society should be sufficient to be inclusive and reflect the key open government stakeholders in the country. At the same time, it should also be lean enough to allow agility and efficiency in decision-making processes and MSF/P functioning. It is important to note that a core function of the MSF/P is to engage stakeholders beyond the MSF/P in the action plan development and implementation process. The MSF/P does not reflect or represent the entirety of stakeholders important in the OGP process.

**Political support.** Sufficient political support, especially from high-level officials from the executive branch of government, who are committed to promoting open government principles in the country, is crucial to the success of MSF/Ps. This can be secured through engagement of high-level officials at specific moments or in specific activities of the MSF/P or through ensuring that they are regularly updated and engaged on matters deliberated upon in the MSF/P.

**Manner of creation.** There are a number of ways to create an MSF/P. It is important that there is a legal or administrative basis in convening a space or platform that is acknowledged and adhered to by its members. In some cases, this basis can be an executive order, a legal decree, or existing legislation. In others, it can just be a formal or informal agreement among MSF/P participants.

The relevant minimum requirement for the MSF outlined in the Participation and Co-Creation Standards is:

**"1.1 A space for ongoing dialogue with participation from both government and civil society members, and other non-governmental representatives as appropriate that meets regularly (at least every six months) is established. Its basic rules on participation are public."**

## 1.2. Who supports country stakeholders?

The Open Government Partnership provides support to country stakeholders through the following:

- **The OGP Support Unit.** This is a small, permanent secretariat that works closely with the Steering Committee to advance the goals of the Open Government Partnership. The Support Unit is designed to: support the broader membership, maintain institutional memory, manage OGP's external communications, and ensure the continuity of organizational relationships with OGP's partners. The Support Unit serves as a neutral, third-party between governments and civil society organizations, ensuring that OGP maintains the productive balance between the two constituencies.

- **The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM).** The IRM is OGP’s accountability arm and the primary means of tracking progress in participating countries. It provides independent, evidence-based, and objective reporting to hold OGP members accountable and support their open government efforts. This is done through reports and timely recommendations during key moments in the action plan cycle.
- **The Steering Committee.** This is OGP’s executive decision-making body. Its role is to: develop, promote, and safeguard OGP’s values, principles, and interests; establish OGP’s core ideas, policies, and rules; and oversee the functioning of the Partnership.

## 2. The Co-Creation Process

Evidence from ten years of OGP shows that high levels of public participation in action plan design is linked to more diverse action plans and more ambitious commitments. For public participation to be meaningful, OGP national members should purposefully design the co-creation process so that it allows any interested stakeholders (citizens, civil society organizations, government departments, subnational governments, parliament, academics, private sector, etc.) to provide ideas and feedback, identify priorities, and propose commitments for the action plan.

The process should intentionally seek input from underrepresented groups to define priorities through targeted awareness-raising and outreach to broaden the circle of engaged actors. It could also seek broader input, including from other ministries, agencies, or parliament(s).

Successful OGP action plans: focus on significant open government priorities and ambitious reforms; are relevant to the OGP values of transparency, accountability, and public participation; and contain specific, time-bound, and measurable commitments. This could mean that a topic or theme is part of several action plans, as ambition is added over time or in response to key emerging issues.

### 2.1. Key Moments in the Co-creation Process

There are at least four key moments in the co-creation process: planning for the process, outreach, action plan development, and feedback. These are referred to as moments rather than steps or stages because, in most cases, they are iterative rather than linear. Additionally, the moments may even be embedded within each other. This will be explained in more detail in the following subsections.



## 2.1.a. Planning for the Process

Early planning for the different activities to be undertaken during the co-creation process is crucial so that the objectives of the co-creation process are clear, stakeholders and their roles are defined, available resources are identified, and the timeline to complete the process is laid out. Planning involves determining the priorities of government and civil society, understanding the current political climate, mapping key events not directly related to the OGP process, and assessing government and civil society relations and how all these elements will impact the co-creation process.

The co-creation plan should elaborate a methodology on:

- **Raising awareness and gathering information.** This includes concrete activities to inform public and state institutions about open government, the Open Government Partnership, the co-creation process, and how they will be able to participate. This also includes activities to gather information from the public on what issues or themes they want the action plan to address.
- **Defining problems, identifying solutions, and developing commitments.** This includes activities to decide: how problems will be defined, how solutions will be achieved, and how these proposed solutions will be developed into action plan commitments. As commitments are developed, relevant government and non government stakeholders need to be engaged to assess legal, technical, and political opportunities and constraints. This may need additional outreach efforts once the process of developing commitments has begun.
- **Providing feedback to participants.** This includes concrete activities that will inform those who participated in the co-creation process about the results of their participation and how their ideas or suggestions will be dealt with in the development and finalization of action plan commitments.

Finally, the co-creation plan should be able to answer the following questions:

<b>WHY</b>	What are the objectives of co-creation? What does the MSF/P want to achieve?
<b>WHO</b>	Who will be involved in the co-creation process? What will their roles be? How will they be involved? How will the MSF/P ensure that diverse actors of different backgrounds, expertise, and locations are able to participate?
<b>WHAT</b>	What key activities will be implemented to realize the goals of co-creation?
<b>HOW</b>	How will each key activity be undertaken? What is the methodology or approach? Who will lead the process? Where will the MSF/P get the financial resources to fund the activities?
<b>WHERE</b>	Where will these activities be taking place? Online or offline? In key cities across the country? In the capital?
<b>WHEN</b>	What is the schedule of activities? What is the co-creation timeline?

Following is an example of a co-creation plan that successfully addresses each of the above questions:



Engagement Opportunities	Outreach and Idea Generation	Analyzing Inputs and Identification of Themes	Thematic Workshops	First Draft, Consultation, and Feedback	Finalization
<b>Purpose</b>	Information dissemination and gathering initial public inputs	Analysis of ideas generated and identification of major themes	Problem definition, solution identification, and prototyping	Public comment on first draft and revision of plans	Plan submitted to ministers for consideration
<b>Participants</b>	National and local CSOs, and the public	MSF with expert panel	Experts with CSOs and agencies working on the themes	Public in general, thematic working groups	MSF
<b>Key Activities</b>	Online open government sessions, online survey	Sense-making workshops	Thematic workshops	Online consultation Thematic workshops	Plan finalization, Plan submission
<b>Resources</b>	Technical team, facilitators and resource persons	Facilitators, resources persons, and workshop costs	Facilitators, resources persons, and workshop costs	Technical team, facilitators, resources persons, and workshop costs	Technical team
<b>Space</b>	Online	Face to face workshops at the capital	Face to face workshops, venue to be selected by working groups	Online, face to face workshops	Finalization meeting, face to face

Information is necessary for participants in the co-creation process to participate meaningfully and effectively. Providing information about the timeline, process, methodology, and how people can participate will enable the public to select avenues of participation and processes they are interested in. Advance notice should be given to stakeholders of meetings, events, and other related activities so that participants are sufficiently informed and ready to participate in OGP processes.

The two relevant minimum requirements for co-creation planning outlined in the Participation and Co-Creation Standards are:

**3.1 The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, publishes on the OGP website/webpage the co-creation timeline and overview of the opportunities for stakeholders to participate at least two weeks before the start of the action plan development process”**

**2.1 A public OGP website dedicated to the members participation in OGP is maintained. (See Section 5).**

## 2.1.b. Outreach

Part of ensuring meaningful participation in the co-creation process is the conduct of outreach activities to raise awareness of open government, OGP, and opportunities to get involved. Outreach activities also ensure the OGP process is inclusive. To ensure inclusive participation, efforts must be made to provide opportunities to as many and as diverse stakeholders as possible. It is particularly important to invite marginalized and habitually-excluded groups to participate in OGP and other public policy processes. This means:

- 1. Conducting outreach activities to the public** to inform them of OGP and the co-creation process, timeline, processes, and opportunities to participate. This may include:
  - a. Activities to ensure that any interested member of the public is able to provide input to the co-creation process. For such engagement to be meaningful, basic information on open government, OGP, the action plan process, timelines, and synchronous and asynchronous mechanisms for participation at different stages of co-creation should be clear. Inputs solicited from members of the public should not require specialized or technical knowledge of open government issues.
  - b. Activities targeted at the initial group of stakeholders identified in the co-creation planning stages. These may include: government departments, different branches of government, civil society groups, representative organizations/networks of traditionally-marginalized groups, the private sector, and specific beneficiary groups, among others.
- 2. Designing processes to allow opportunities to participate** either physically or remotely, depending on context. A combination of online and offline engagement may be needed to address gaps in access, especially for people located in areas remote from where face-to-face activities are taking place.
- 3. Analyzing barriers to participation** for some groups and addressing these barriers through inclusive methodologies. Knowing barriers to participation will help those designing the co-creation process find better ways to engage a diverse range of participants.
- 4. Initiating targeted engagement and designing participation channels** to habitually-excluded groups. MSF/Ps may consider recruiting individuals or organizations to serve as liaisons to specific underrepresented communities to support their engagement and consultation in the process, including targeted outreach to relevant groups such as women, youth, or disability organizations.

The MSF/P can use the outreach activities as an opportunity to gather information from participants regarding issues in transparency, accountability, and citizen participation that they would like addressed, as well as problems they want the action plan to tackle, or open government concerns they would like the action plan to consider. This can be done in several ways: asking participants a focus question (or a few) during outreach events or activities, issuing an open call for ideas online, or circulating an online survey.

The questions to be asked and the process of collecting responses needs to be designed according to the objectives of the co-creation process. It is also important to ensure that the responses and contributions of participants are recorded and documented in a way that will help facilitate the subsequent process of collating or summarizing them and providing a reasoned response (see page 2.1.c for more information on reasoned response).

The two relevant minimum requirements for outreach outlined in the Participation and Co-Creation Standards are:

3.2. The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, conducts outreach activities with stakeholders to raise awareness of OGP and opportunities to get involved in the development of the action plan.

3.3. The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, develops a mechanism to gather inputs from a range of stakeholders during an appropriate period of time for the chosen mechanism.

## 2.1.c. Action Plan Development

With initial inputs from the outreach process, the MSF/P may proceed with action plan development by focusing on identifying commitments that will be included in the action plan.

**Analyzing Inputs.** Depending on the type, quality, and volume of the inputs gathered from the outreach process, there needs to be a suitable way to make sense of the contributions collected. For example, if during outreach activities, stakeholders are asked what issues the action plan should cover, then there needs to be a way to categorize and cluster similar ideas and find the common theme that binds them. They may be categorized by: sector or theme (e.g., health, education, environment); jurisdiction for implementation (e.g., government ministry, parliament, supreme court, local government); or public governance themes (e.g., transparency, civic participation, digital governance). In this way, numerous ideas may be narrowed to a few that will become the basis for moving forward in the next steps.



**Defining the problem.** Strong and transformative commitments clearly articulate the problem that the commitment seeks to address. Thus, it is important that the problem experienced by citizens or specific target groups of beneficiaries is appropriately identified, analyzed, and articulated. Essential questions will answer: what the problem is about; who is affected by it and how; what the root causes are; and what aspects of the problem relate to or are compounded by the lack of government information, public accountability mechanisms, or opportunities for public participation and monitoring. It is also important to identify what has been done so far by government and other stakeholders to address the problem identified.

Thematic working groups may be convened to undertake the task of problem definition. For example, suppose ten issues were identified from the sense-making process, one of which is related to open contracting. In that case, a thematic working group may be convened to explore the issue further and undertake the problem definition exercise. The working group may be composed of agencies involved in the public procurement process, civil society organizations working on procurement reform, scholars researching the topic, and private sector organizations representing supplier and contractor groups. In this way, the problem definition exercise is solid, relevant, and comprehensive, and engages the right stakeholders.

Also, at this stage, targeted public engagement can be done on specific issues or concerns identified during the sense-making process. For example, if the problem is related to improving educational facilities and services, the MSF/P may involve groups of students, parents, and teachers in the problem definition and in the subsequent phase of solutions identification.

**Identifying solutions.** With the problem articulated, potential solutions can be explored. It is important to explore various solutions and select those which most appropriately address the problem identified and build on activities that the country has attempted in the past to address the problem, if any. It is also important to articulate how the OGP platform can effectively respond to identified issues and whether the proposed solutions are relevant to the OGP values of access to information, civic participation, and public accountability.

It is important to note that even where inputs are solicited in the form of proposed commitments, it is still valuable to go back to the problem definition process to ensure that proposed solutions address the problem and assess whether different commitment proposals could tackle the same or similar problems.

**Drafting commitments.** The process of drafting the commitment should ideally only start after the problem has been clearly defined, potential solutions have been explored, and one (or more) specific solutions have been selected as proposed commitments to explore. Specific activities and milestones should have also been identified, and stakeholders relevant for the implementation of the commitments should have been engaged to ensure feasibility and buy-in for implementation.

OGP member countries draft commitment proposals in a commitment template prescribed by OGP. The commitment template contains a commitment description, a narrative on how the commitment is aligned with OGP values and the wider strategic goals of the country, milestones and deliverables, and stakeholders who will be involved in the implementation of the commitment.

In addition to the commitment templates, the action plan needs to include an introduction, a description of government efforts to date, and an elaboration of the action plan development process, for which the writing process may begin in parallel to commitment planning and design, and can be finalized after the list of commitments to include is completed.

In the process of drafting the commitments and preparing the action plan, a new set of necessary ideas may emerge requiring the consultation of another set of stakeholders. This might require additional outreach. The MSF/P should be quick to recognize these opportunities and implement steps for outreach and consultation.

Finally, a country may consider prioritizing commitments when several commitment proposals have been identified. Considerations have to be made regarding: the urgency and magnitude of the problem to be addressed; political and operational feasibility given timeframes and resources; and potential impact of the commitments on transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.

## 2.1.d Feedback and Reasoned Response

Ongoing dialogue, whereby ideas received and decisions made are communicated back to stakeholders and then further refined through additional rounds of engagement, can help ensure genuine, high-quality conversation and ultimately greater buy-in of the action plan. The greater the depth of dialogue, the greater the potential impact of commitments, the better the mutual understanding of ideas and reasonings, and eventually, the more likely it is that genuinely co-created commitments will be effectively implemented.

A reasoned response is the government's or the MSF/P's reply to stakeholders who contributed to the action plan and to the public in general, which contains the reasoning behind decisions made on their contributions. Reasoned response can be made for each of the following decisions:

- Inclusion - suggestions or comments that are considered in drafting or finalizing commitments
- Amendment - suggestions or comments that are considered in drafting or finalizing commitments, but with some modifications
- Rejection - suggestions or comments that are not considered in drafting or finalizing commitments

Reasoned response to stakeholder input and feedback is highly correlated with ambition, completion, and early results. Providing a reasoned response as to why specific priorities, ideas, or activities were or were not included in the action plan can also help ensure accountability and overcome resistance from those whose proposals were rejected.

The MSF/P or the government should also present the reasoning for selecting commitments, including justifications for commitment proposals not adopted and other feedback as appropriate. The basis for decision-making should be published, and all results in the decision-making process should be made publicly available.

Response to stakeholders who contributed to the action plan development should include: (1) the input that was collected in the consultation/engagement; (2) how decision-makers considered the input; (3) how the input influenced the outcome of the decision; (4) whether the input was included/not included and why; and (4) in what ways the input will be considered beyond the current action plan, if at all.

Reasoned response must occur before the action plan is finalized. It can occur at several points during the development of the action plan, including during crafting the co-creation timeline when stakeholders give comments, during the idea generation process, and even during the selection of commitments to be included in the action plan. Reasoned response can be provided in several ways, for instance, in a document published in the OGP repository that contains contributions and how these are dealt with or during meetings called for the purpose of defining and selecting commitments. What is important is that the process of providing a reasoned response is documented, communicated to stakeholders, and described in the action plan.

**Finalization.** After reviewing the commitments and other contents of the action plan (see Section 3) and providing a reasoned response, the government or MSF/P will finalize the action plan, securing required government approvals, and submit it to the Support Unit.

Once the plan is finalized, it is important to also provide closure to the co-creation process by sharing next steps and information about how stakeholders will be engaged in the implementation of the action plan or can stay informed of progress. Presenting the action plan in a public event with high-level participation can help kickstart the implementation process and provide support.



The two relevant minimum requirements for Action Plan Development outlined in the Participation and Co-Creation Standards are:

4.1 The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, documents and reports back or publishes written feedback to stakeholders on how their contributions were considered during the development of the action plan.

4.2 A publicly available document repository on the OGP online site which provides access to documents related to the OGP process, including, at a minimum, information and evidence of the co-creation process and of the implementation of commitments is maintained and regularly updated (at least twice a year). (See Section 5 for more information on repositories.)

## 2.2. Submission of Action Plans to OGP

Action plans must be submitted to the OGP Support Unit in both the administrative language of the country and English. This is a mandatory requirement. Submitting action plans in English ensures that the wider OGP membership can read about your open government reforms and learning across borders can take place.

The official version of the action plan is the one published on the OGP website. If a participating government wishes to amend any part of their action plan, they must do so within one year of the original due date for submission (June 30 or December 31). OGP members may not submit draft action plans, but do have the opportunity to make amendments after submission. To make amendments to the action plan, the participating government must send an updated version that clearly outlines all changes, in English and in the administrative language (if applicable), to the OGP Support Unit. Note that in this case, the IRM Action Plan Review will assess the action plan as originally submitted, but the IRM Results Report will assess the amended action plan.

## 2.3. Four-Year Rules Refresh

Countries can decide to develop a two-year or four-year action plan. The countries that select the four-year option will have to schedule a mandatory refresh period at the two-year mark. This will allow the country to review the progress of the action plan, assess its operating context, and consider other relevant contextual information that will have a bearing on the action plan in the remaining two-year period. With this review and assessment, the country may decide to update, modify or include new commitments that are responsive to current realities and needs, or support the implementation of other commitments.

The action plan refresh process involves at least the following key processes:

- a. **Review of progress.** The MSF/P should: conduct a review of the action plan implementation; determine progress or lack thereof; and identify gaps, challenges, bottlenecks, and changes in the contextual environment impacting the action plan.
- b. **Outreach.** The MSF/P where established, or the government where there is no MSF, will communicate the results of the review of progress of the current action plan. The public should be given opportunities to comment and provide feedback on this, allowing them to make suggestions on how to improve action plan implementation, suggest commitments to modify, and propose new commitments to include to improve progress.

- c. **Revision.** Based on suggestions gathered and in dialogue with stakeholders and experts, the MSF/P revises the action plan by modifying commitments (e.g., adding new activities or milestones) or adding new commitments.
- d. **Feedback.** The MSF/P where established, or the government where there is no MSF, will provide feedback to stakeholders about how their contributions and suggestions were considered. At the same time, the revised action plan covering the remaining two-year period will be published along with the reasoned response.
- e. **Delivery.** The refreshed action plan should be delivered to the Support Unit no later than six months after the two-year mark. It should contain details about the refresh period and specify all changes and additions made.

In this case, the timeline of the steps indicated above, including the opportunities for participation, should be published at least two weeks before the start of the review process. Likewise, the results of consultations should be shared with stakeholders outlining the results of their contributions during the refresh process.

The two relevant minimum requirements for refresh outlined in the Participation and Co-Creation Standards are the following:

3.1 The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, publishes on the OGP website/webpage the co-creation timeline and overview of the opportunities for stakeholders to participate at least two weeks before the start of the action plan development process.

4.1 The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, documents and reports back or publishes written feedback to stakeholders on how their contributions were considered during the development of the action plan.

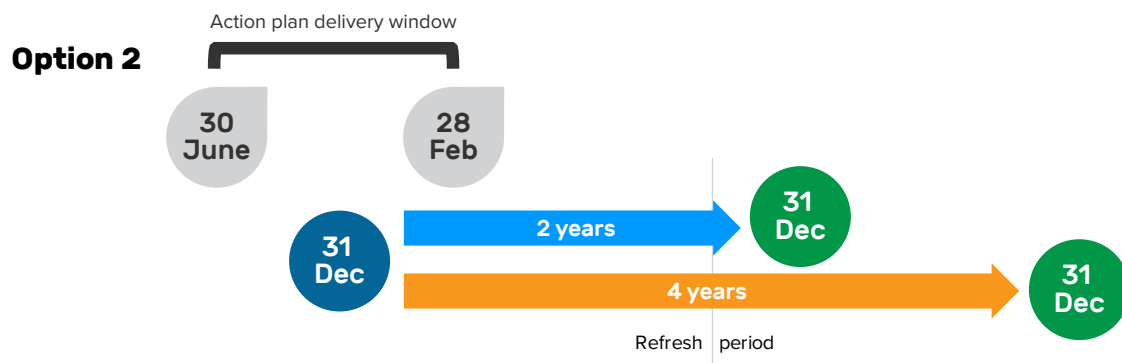
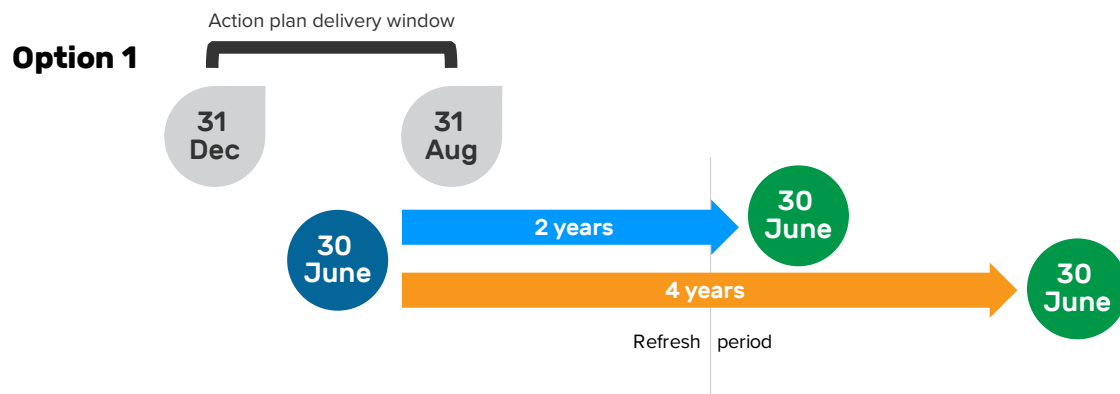
## 3. Action Plan Rules and Templates

Action plans are at the core of a country's participation in OGP. They are the product of a co-creation process in which government and civil society develop ambitious commitments to foster transparency, accountability, and public participation. This chapter reflects lessons learned from OGP participating governments on producing high-quality action plans. In addition, the chapter includes templates that will ensure all the necessary information on commitments and the development process is included in the action plan.

### 3.1. Action Plan Timelines and Delivery Windows

When planning for a new action plan, the following must be considered:

- **Action plan length.** Countries can decide to develop a two-year or a four-year action plan. Four-year plans have to schedule a mandatory refresh (see Section 2.3).
- **Delivery windows.** Countries will be able to select from two delivery windows that will determine the end date of the action plan (June 30 or December 31), two or four years later. Action plans ending on June 30 can be delivered and begin implementation any time between January 1 and August 31 (six months before and two months after). Plans with a December end date can be delivered any time between July 1 and February 28. Further extensions are not allowed.



- **Assessment schedule.** All countries should expect to receive a Co-Creation Brief, an Action Plan Review, and a Results Report from the IRM. For countries with four-year action plans, the IRM will offer an “implementation check-in” after two years of implementation. The check-in is a transparency and accountability moment for the country’s OGP process through which it will begin research on the implementation of commitments and encourage reflection on achievements, challenges, and opportunities going forward.
- **Co-creation of consecutive action plan.** The Support Unit recommends that countries co-create their next action plan during the final months of implementation of the current action plan.

### 3.1.a. Delays

- Participating governments must deliver their action plans on time. Action plans are considered delivered once they are uploaded to the OGP website.
- The Support Unit cannot grant extensions on the delivery of action plans, and the IRM will not change their deadlines to accommodate delays.
- If a participating government does not deliver a new action plan within one year after the completion of their previous action plan, they will be officially late and considered to have acted contrary to process (see Section 7). The participating government will receive a letter from the Support Unit noting the delay, and it will be copied to the Criteria and Standards subcommittee to consider any additional actions or support as necessary (see Section 7).

- Note that as transitions continue to the new model, the deadline for all countries that develop action plans in 2022 and 2023 will be December 31. Countries that fail to deliver after that date will have acted contrary to process. December plans that are received in January and February will have acted contrary to process.

### 3.1.b. Political Transitions and Elections

Political transitions pose clear challenges to the timely delivery of action plans. In advance of and during these periods, it can be difficult to secure high-level political support to develop or implement ambitious commitments. Moreover, it is important that those responsible for implementing commitments are part of the development process. Given these challenges, the following are options for delivery of an action plan during political transitions:

- **Wait a year:** Several participating countries have successfully waited for one year until the new administration and authorities are in place. It is important to note that the country will be considered to have acted contrary to OGP processes for one cycle (see Section 6).
- **Limited action plan:** The second option is to develop a more limited action plan, subsequently allowing the new administration to develop an alternative, more streamlined co-creation process to add new commitments (while acting in accordance with action plan modification rules outlined in Section 2.2). This allows a participating government to maintain momentum and avoid acting contrary to process. However, the commitments might not be very ambitious, or they might not be completed, depending on the priorities of the new administration (see next bullet). Note that in these cases, only the first co-creation process will be assessed by the IRM.
- **Delivery of a regular action plan:** Some countries have chosen to develop regular action plans during transitions. In the publication “Why OGP Commitments Fall Behind,” the IRM highlights that beyond lack of capacity or coordination, a common cause for commitment failure is “discontinuity from one administration to another during political transition.” Therefore, if this option is chosen, a participating government should ensure clear communication channels with the incoming administration (and with civil society) and a thorough handover process.

Regardless of the option chosen, it is important to discuss the different approaches within the government and the Multi-Stakeholder Forum/Platform, and with the OGP Support Unit representative. The Multi-Stakeholder Forum/Platform plays a crucial role during political transitions, particularly in countries with a higher rate of government employee turnover, as it can provide important institutional memory.

## 3.2. Action Plan and Commitment Template

### 3.2.a. Characteristics of a Good Action Plan

Successful OGP action plans: focus on ambitious national open government priorities; are relevant to the values of transparency, accountability and public participation; and contain specific, time-bound and measurable commitments.

- **Ambitious:** OGP aims to promote ambitious open government reforms that stretch the government beyond its current state of practice, significantly improving the status quo by strengthening transparency, accountability, and public participation in government. Countries may choose to initiate new open government initiatives in their action plans or improve on existing, ongoing reforms. Countries are encouraged to show clear improvement from action plan to action plan.
- **Relevant:** Countries should ensure that each commitment included in the action plan clearly advances one or more of the following open government principles:

- **Transparency:** This includes publication of all government-held information (as opposed to only information on government activities); proactive or reactive releases of information; mechanisms to strengthen the right to information; and open access to government information.
- **Accountability:** There are rules, regulations, and mechanisms in place that 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. Commitments on accountability should typically include an answerability element, i.e., that they are not purely internal systems of accountability but involve the public.
- **Participation:** Governments should seek to mobilize citizens to engage in a dialogue on government policies or programs; provide input or feedback; and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative, and effective governance.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Governments embrace the importance of providing citizens with open access to technology, the role of new technologies in driving innovation, and the importance of increasing the capacity of citizens to use technology. E-government initiatives are welcome, but in order to be relevant to OGP, action plans should explain how these initiatives advance government transparency, accountability, and/or public participation.
- **SMART:** Individual commitments should conform to the following:
  - **Specific:** The commitment precisely describes the problem it is trying to solve, the activities it comprises, and the expected outcomes.
  - **Measurable:** It is possible to verify the fulfillment of the commitment. Where commitments have multiple sub-commitments, they are broken into clear, measurable milestones.
  - **Answerable:** The commitment clearly specifies the main implementing agency; the coordinating or supporting agencies where relevant; and, if necessary, other civil society, multilateral, or private sector partners who have a role in implementing the commitment.
  - **Relevant:** For each commitment, the action plan should explain its relevance to one or more of the open government principles outlined above.
  - **Time-bound:** Commitment clearly states the date when it will be completed, as well as dates for milestones, benchmarks, and any other deadline.

### 3.2.b. Action Plan Contents

The action plan should contain the following:

Content	Description	Guide Questions
<b>1. Introduction</b>	This section briefly explains the national and local context by discussing why open government efforts are important for the country. This section should also outline the governance reform priorities for the country and identify the major social, political, or economic issues that the country intends to address through its OGP action plan, along with a justification.	<p>What is the long-term vision for open government in your context?</p> <p>What are the medium-term open government goals that the government wants to achieve?</p> <p>How does this action plan contribute to achieving the open government goals?</p> <p>What major social, political, or economic issues does the country intend to address through this action plan, and why?</p>
<b>2. Open government efforts to date</b>	This section provides a brief narrative of key open government initiatives and accomplishments to date, particularly those that reflect collaboration with civil society and how they relate to the co-created commitments. This section should explain how the new action plan builds on previous OGP action plans (if relevant) and related efforts to strengthen open government reforms.	<p>What are the achievements in open government to date (for example, recent open government reforms)?</p> <p>How has collaboration between government and civil society impacted these reforms?</p> <p>If a previous action plan exists, what open government reforms proposed in the previous action plans were achieved? Not achieved? Why?</p> <p>If a previous action plan exists, how does this new action plan build on what has been achieved in previous action plan(s) and other efforts to strengthen open government?</p>
<b>3. Action plan development process</b>	This section describes the action plan development process, highlighting how government collaborated with civil society and other stakeholders to develop and finalize the action plan. It should also describe how the MSF/P, or the government where there is no established MSF/P, planned for co-creation, conducted outreach to increase participation of stakeholders, developed the commitments, and provided feedback to stakeholders who participated in the process. Please expressly note compliance with the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards, with particular attention to the minimum participation requirements (see Section 2 and 7).	<p>How did the country develop the co-creation timeline? Who was involved in the process? How were inputs from stakeholders taken into consideration?</p> <p>How were outreach activities conducted? How were awareness-raising activities maximized to enhance public participation? What kind of spaces have been used or created to enable the collaboration between government and civil society in co-creating the action plan?</p> <p>How was the action plan development process conducted? Describe what was done in sense-making, problem definition, solution identification, and commitment drafting?</p> <p>How was reasoned response provided? What were the processes undertaken to finalize the action plan?</p>
<b>4. Commitments</b>	This section presents the commitments developed during the co-creation process. The commitment template will be used for each commitment included in the action plan.	(See relevant guide questions in the commitment template.)

### 3.2.c. The Commitment Template

The commitment template articulates what the government wants to accomplish within the timeline of the action plan. It specifies the problem that the commitment addresses, the solution (the commitment) that it will implement to address the problem, and the resources needed to implement the solution. It also specifies the milestones and timeline for the commitment, including the government and civil society stakeholders who will work together to ensure the commitment’s implementation and completion.

Each commitment that the government will put forward as part of the action plan will have a commitment template. This allows a better articulation of each of the desired actions that the government commits to. However, it is important to also bear in mind how each of the commitments reinforce each other in promoting open government in the country.

It is not recommended to use the commitment template to gather ideas or proposals for commitments during the co-creation process. The template is best used when: problems are clearly defined; potential solutions to address problems are discussed and prioritized; and when there is a clear idea of what the commitment will look like in order to organize ideas, articulate the theory of change, and plan ahead for the milestones needed to reach specific objectives over the duration of the action plan.

The commitment template is illustrated below:

<b>Country</b>			
<b>Number and Name of the Commitment</b>			
<b>Brief Description of the Commitment</b>	<i>(Describe what the commitment wants to do and would like to achieve in less than 200 characters.)</i>		
<b>Commitment Lead</b>			
<b>Supporting Stakeholders</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Civil Society</b>	<b>Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)</b>
			<i>Whenever relevant, please indicate the role and involvement of parliament or legislative department, and other actors such as the private sector for the success of the commitment. If they have not been previously engaged, mention how they will be engaged during and/or after the adoption of the plan.</i>
<b>Period Covered</b>			

## Problem Definition

**1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?**

*Who are affected? Where is it taking place? How are they affected? When are they most affected? When did the problem start? How long has the problem impacted those affected?*

**2. What are the causes of the problem?**

*Elaborate on your understanding of the causes of the problem. As much as possible, identify the root causes. Utilize problem analytical tools (e.g., problem tree, five whys, fishbone diagram, or other related methods) when necessary and provide evidence whenever possible.*

## Commitment Description

**1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?**

*What solutions were made available for this problem in previous years? How successful have they been?*

**2. What solution are you proposing?**

*What will you do to solve the problem? How does this differ from previous efforts? In what way will the solution solve the problem? How will the solution solve the problem? Will it solve the problem in its entirety or partially? What portion of the problem will it solve, if not the whole problem?*

**3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?**

*What outputs would we like to produce? What changes in knowledge, skills, and capacities do we want to achieve? What changes in behavior, systems, and practices do we want to create?*



## Commitment Planning

*(This is an initial planning process largely looking at milestones and expected outputs, as well as key stakeholders involved.)*

<b>Milestones</b> <i>(Milestones are part of a series of actions or events that, when executed, will lead to the achievement of the result the commitment would like to achieve.)</i>	<b>Expected Outputs</b> <i>(Outputs are concrete, objectively-verifiable results that are direct products of activities conducted or implemented.)</i>	<b>Expected Completion Date</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>		
			Lead:		
			<u>Supporting Stakeholders</u>		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			Lead:		
			<u>Supporting Stakeholders</u>		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)

### 3.3. Self-Assessment Template

Self-assessment reports are a key element of the Open Government Partnership accountability mechanism. It documents the overall progress of the action plan based on the information in the repository/dashboard. It must highlight opportunities and gaps to further improve the delivery of the action plan.

While it is only expected from countries to develop one self-assessment report at the end of the implementation of the action plan, some countries found it helpful to prepare a yearly self-assessment report and invite the public to comment and provide feedback on the content of the report. The report needs to be published on the country's OGP website and can be published in the OGP website, including the comments and how the comments were addressed.

A self-assessment template is provided below:

<b>Country</b>	
<b>Period Covered by the Action Plan</b>	
<b>Date Prepared</b>	

### Introduction

*Briefly explain below the national and local context by discussing why open government efforts are important for the country. Also, briefly outline the governance reform priorities for the country and how the action plan under assessment contributes to this. Also, provide a brief description of how the country's OGP commitments are relevant to the core open government principles of OGP (transparency, civic participation, public accountability).*

### Action Plan Process

*Provide a narrative of the government's approach to participation throughout the OGP cycle. Also, provide a narrative of the government's approach to participation during implementation. Please expressly note compliance with the relevant standards in the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards.*

### Use of IRM Recommendations

*Briefly explain how the five key recommendations from the latest IRM report were used to improve the process of action plan drafting and implementation in this action plan cycle.*

## Assessment of the Commitments

Provide your progress assessment below of each of the commitments proposed in the action plan using progress colors. Provide the evidence supporting the assessment, briefly give reasons to support the assessment, and identify next steps.



Completed  
or substantial progress



Limited progress



Not started/With severe delays

Commitment	Assessment of Progress (Green/Amber/Red)	Evidence supporting the assessment	Reasons for the assessment	Next Steps

## Lessons and Insights

Based on the results above, what are your key lessons and insights learned in developing and implementing the action plan?

## Recommendations

Based on the results above, what critical actions need to be carried out? What adjustments are required? What other tasks not necessarily identified in the action plan are needed to progress the commitments? Who needs to be involved so that results will be achieved?

## 3.4. Challenge Commitments

In 2021, OGP introduced “challenge commitments” to enhance flexibility and allow countries that are implementing an action plan to respond to emerging national priorities by using the OGP platform and its participation and co-creation mechanisms, including MSF/P the action plan as a tool to articulate reforms and the IRM as an accountability mechanism. For example, in the past, emerging national priorities that were added as challenge commitments in the action plan are the implementation support to relevant laws passed by parliament/congress, activities to respond to a major event like a pandemic or a corruption crisis (e.g., COVID spending trackers), and initiatives that align with a major global summit the country is participating in (e.g., integrating commitments made at the London Anti-Corruption or the UN General Assembly Special Session against Corruption).

Challenge commitments are meant for countries that have a live action plan. Countries that are co-creating are not eligible to add challenge commitments as they should include commitments which address emerging national priorities through their regular OGP co-creation process.

Any country with a live action plan can introduce up to two challenge commitments as long as they follow these guidelines:

1. The commitment must address an emerging national priority or priorities. National OGP actors are free to decide what a national priority entails.
2. Challenge commitments do not require a full co-creation process as established in the “Co-Creation and Participation Standards,” but must follow co-creation values. A challenge commitment can therefore be proposed by either a government agency or a civil society organization in accordance with the respective national structure or process for OGP, such as a MSF, but can only be included in the plan if it has been worked on collaboratively and the government has provided a reasoned response.
3. Challenge commitments can be introduced at any time during the implementation period, but should only be included in live action plans that allow for the commitment to be completed by the end of that action plan.
4. Completion of challenge commitments will be assessed in the IRM Results Report at the end of the action plan implementation period.

All challenge commitments should be included in an updated version of the action plan. The updated version should include a new commitment template for each challenge commitment, a note that describes the process by which the commitment was included, and how co-creation with civil society was assured. This updated version should be sent to the OGP Support Unit for publication.

## 4. Implementation

Evidence from IRM reports and [OGP's Decade Report](#) show that continued stakeholder dialogue and participation during the implementation process is strongly correlated with high levels of completion and stronger results.

Ongoing engagement can help maintain momentum for implementation following the publication of the action plan. This could include engagement of relevant ministries, civil society, as well as other stakeholders in implementation, monitoring, communications, and coordination activities needed for successful completion of commitments. Engaging relevant ministers or other high-level representatives at least once a year during implementation to discuss progress, delays, and opportunities to address challenges can also help sustain political support for commitments. Engagement and dialogue during implementation can help stakeholders hold the government and other implementing partners accountable for results and enable the adoption of course correction measures, if priorities or circumstances change.

The MSF/P or governments may choose to add “challenge commitments” during the implementation of action plans to respond to emerging situations relevant to the context. In other cases, civil society and other non-government actors can have co-ownership over the implementation and reporting of commitments, sometimes via thematic working tables established during the action plan development stage (see Standard 3).

During implementation, there are at least four important areas where collaboration between lead implementing agencies, supporting partners, and other stakeholders can be beneficial: implementation planning, implementation activities, monitoring, and assessments.

## 4.1 Implementation Planning

While the action plan commitment template contains milestones and specific outputs, it does not contain details of specific activities that are required to realize the milestones identified in the commitment statement. Conducting implementation planning among the stakeholders identified in the commitment template can help establish stronger working relationships and build a support constituency for the commitment while also ensuring that specific activities are identified, resourced, and assigned to achieve the commitment milestones.

Implementation planning can be done separately for each commitment. The implementation plans can include the identification of specific activities, resources needed, a timeframe, expected outputs, and responsible persons and ministries. It may also include identified risks and how to manage them.

## 4.2 Implementation Activities

Lead implementing agencies can be supported by other stakeholders, including civil society during the implementation process in some of the following ways:

- Communications: Building public awareness of new or changed policies or programs resulting from the commitments (e.g., new rights, services, etc.)
- Expertise: Advising on policy implementation
- Service provision and/or co-production: Implementing the policy, in partnership with the government
- Enabling use and feedback: Supporting intended users or beneficiaries of commitments to access new policies, programs, and services enabled by commitments and channeling user or beneficiary feedback to the lead implementing agencies

Additionally, as good practice, the MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, should consider holding open meetings and encouraging a channel of communication allowing implementing agencies to provide updates on commitment completion and listen and respond to civil society and other stakeholder questions and input.

## 4.3 Monitoring

At specific time intervals, meetings among commitment stakeholders may be conducted to: determine the progress of implementation plans, identify challenges in implementation, and conduct course-correction. This can provide opportunities for implementing agencies to report on how the activities are progressing towards commitment milestones and for civil society stakeholders to: provide feedback and ask questions regarding risks and challenges, foster accountability, and discuss ways forward.

Action plan monitoring can be done at the level of each commitment. It should ideally be done in a manner that provides opportunities for discussion and dialogue and strengthens the collaboration among stakeholders interested in and/or involved in implementing the commitment. Thematic working groups can be helpful in engaging with specific stakeholders in monitoring planned activities under each commitment.

## 4.4 Assessments

While implementation planning and results monitoring are most useful at the individual commitment level, there is also a need to assess how the whole action plan is progressing towards committed results. This allows stakeholders, including MSF members, to: reflect on how the commitments are moving forward, validate the results, and identify any necessary catch-up measures.

To allow a more systematic way of assessing the progress of the action plan and to provide sufficient information to conduct results monitoring and action plan assessments, as mentioned above, it may be useful to maintain a public dashboard with up-to-date information on the progress of implementation of commitments, delays, and other relevant information to corroborate the document repository.

The followings sets the minimum requirement for implementation outlined in the Participation and Co-Creation Standards:

5.1. The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, holds at least two meetings every year with civil society to present results on the implementation of the action plan and collect comments.

# 5. Accountability and Information Provision

Access to relevant information is essential for enabling participation and ensuring accountability throughout the OGP process. OGP members should follow the principle of maximum transparency, whereby relevant information is published and disseminated proactively, in the most relevant format(s) and through the most appropriate means in order to reach as much of the population as possible. This can help raise awareness of OGP processes generally and opportunities for participation. This can also help foster accountability because the public can scrutinize and review OGP-related information and ask questions from responsible ministries involved in the OGP process.

## 5.1. National OGP Website

An OGP website can be a stand-alone website or an OGP subsite/web page on a government website where all information related to the country's OGP processes, outputs, and outcomes are published. Based on the experience of member countries, it is helpful if the website or page:

- Is **searchable**, so information can be easily located and retrieved;
- Contains information and documents in **non-technical language that is as easy to understand**; and
- Has features that **allow the public to comment** as progress updates.

The following information is useful to publish on the website:

- a. Leading and participating government agencies and their contact information
- b. Lead agency and government point of contact for OGP and their contact information
- c. OGP processes and opportunities for participation
- d. Meeting agendas and minutes
- e. Civil society organizations that participate in the MSF
- f. Regular updates (at least every six months) on the progress of commitment implementation, including progress toward milestones, reasons for any delays, and next steps (Ideally, this would be a public dashboard to corroborate the document repository.)
- g. Other relevant documents that pertain to the country's open government processes

The following are the basic considerations that governments need to take into account to ensure the usefulness and usability of published information:

- **Language** – The government publishes key OGP information and documents in all administrative languages.
- **Accessibility** – The government should consider additional steps to make information accessible by those with visual or auditory impairment.
- **Openness** – The government, where relevant, publishes information related to process and commitment completion in machine-readable, reusable, and open formats.

The relevant minimum requirement for OGP Website outlined in the Participation and Co-Creation Standards is:

2.1. A public OGP website dedicated to the members participation in OGP is maintained.

## 5.2. Document Repository

A document repository, for OGP purposes, is a centralized online website, webpage, platform, or folder where information and evidence related to the action plan (including process and implementation) are publicly stored, organized, updated, and disseminated.

The repository serves as a tool for accountability. It is meant to be a transparent and easy way for stakeholders to access up-to-date evidence related to the government's OGP activities. It can be used to monitor the action plan development and implementation processes in the country or entity.

The repository must be:

1. **Available online without barriers to access** – Anyone should be able to access the repository where the information is hosted, and it should not require passwords or credentials to access.
2. **Linked to evidence, with information on development and implementation of the action plan** – Information on the repository should serve as clear evidence of what happened during the action plan development and implementation processes.

3. **Updated regularly, at least twice a year** – Action plan updates should include progress against milestones, reasons for any delays, and next steps.

## 5.3 Designing an Online Repository

During the design of online repositories, participating governments should prioritize the following:

- **Establishing content guidelines.** Key decisions about the type of content accepted by the repository should be made and shared in advance with implementing ministries/agencies. This ensures a level of quality control over metadata, formatting, and in some cases content of the deposited material. It is important to identify who is responsible for documenting the progress of each commitment and make sure they understand how evidence should be gathered and uploaded throughout the implementation process.
- **Adhering to legal considerations.** Make sure the platform of choice complies with national and international regulations, including those relating to data architecture, security, privacy, and accessibility and record-keeping.

### 5.3.a. Using Your Current OGP Website

The national OGP website required by the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards may also be used as the online repository, as long as the requirements noted in Section 5.1 are met.

In its most basic form, this could be a series of electronic folders, including at least one per commitment and one for the action plan development process. To enhance accessibility, the folder could be complemented with a spreadsheet that tracks the commitments and the completion evidence available or, as several OGP participants have done, an online tracking dashboard.

It should be noted that a dashboard by itself is not considered a repository. Unless it is linked to evidence and is updated every six months, it will not suffice to cover the repository requirement.

### 5.3.b. Using Ready-made Tools

Similar to the basic version proposed above, a participating government may decide to use one of the ready-made online filing systems to house their repository. Two options for doing this are Google Drive or Dropbox. If this option is chosen, the government must ensure that this complies with domestic regulations, particularly those that have to do with privacy and security.

There are online manuals available for both [Google Drive](#) and [Dropbox](#). In order to use one of these platforms as a repository, folders must be created for each of the commitments in the action plan, and one relating to action plan processes. The administrator would have to make sure that the settings allow for public access to the folders and upload information as it becomes available. As in the previous case, the folders could be complemented with a spreadsheet to track progress.

### 5.3.c. Open-source Repositories

Participating governments may decide to adopt one of the open source open-access repositories that are available. The advantages of this model include: support for a wide range of document formats for archiving; relatively easy implementation; and maintenance is not expensive. These systems can also facilitate content aggregation for search engines. The following are open repository options:

- **E-prints:** E-prints is generic repository building software developed by the University of Southampton. It is intended to create a highly configurable web-based repository. E-prints is often used to store images, research data, audio archives, or anything that can be stored digitally.



- **DSpace**: DSpace is an open source software application that enables easy and open access to all types of digital content including text, images, moving images, audio, and data sets. It was developed by MIT and Hewlett Packard, and is completely customizable.
- **CONSUL**: CONSUL is open source software designed to allow citizens to participate in day-to-day decisions of government institutions by facilitating the creation of participation initiatives. CONSUL can be customized to include different features and is free.

The relevant minimum requirement for OGP document repository outlined in the Participation and Co-Creation Standards is:

2.2. A publicly available document repository on the OGP online site which provides access to documents related to the OGP process, including, at a minimum, information and evidence of the co-creation process and of the implementation of commitments is maintained and regularly updated (at least twice a year).

## 6. Beyond the National Executive: Guidance on Participation of Other Branches and Levels of Government

### 6.1. Parliamentary Engagement

Many of the key aspirations of the open government movement – securing a freedom of information framework, promoting and protecting civic space, and defending democratic processes, among others – require the active engagement or support of parliaments. Following [an extensive review and consultation process](#), the OGP Steering Committee approved the [Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement](#) in November 2021.

The Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement offers two useful and proven models:

1. **Participation in the national OGP process.** Participation by parliaments in the national or local process can take many forms and deliver any number of results. Parliamentary involvement has considerable advantages, allowing synergies on the open government agenda to be explored across branches of government. Beyond this, a single national or local process also allows more efficient use of time and resources allocated to co-creation and consultation, and reduces the transaction costs for civil society to engage in OGP related activities. This is the model of engagement already pursued in the majority of countries with parliamentary involvement in OGP.

The [Parliamentary Engagement in OGP: Menu of Options](#) (living document) provides guidance, ideas, and examples for OGP stakeholders from government, parliament, and civil society to consider.

2. **Participation via submission of a stand-alone Open Parliament Plan.** Parliaments may choose to co-create an independent parliamentary action plan through a stand-alone process. This may be the preferred option in countries or for local members where it proves difficult for parliaments to work within the confines of the OGP action plan, whether because of conflicting executive and legislative calendars, or due to formal and informal protocols governing engagement between the two branches. Standardized guidance for open parliament plans is forthcoming. Parliaments pursuing this option must contact their OGP Support Unit representative to notify them of their interest before commencing the co-creation process.

## 6.2. OGP Judiciary

In a multistakeholder model, the judiciary can act as an independent stakeholder who is not subject to improper influence from the other branches of government, or from private or partisan interests. As such, it diversifies and strengthens the multistakeholder process.

In addition, representatives of the judiciary participating in the OGP process can advise on jurisprudence or legal issues related to proposed commitments, as relevant. They can also initiate or participate in commitments related to openness of the judicial system or people's access to justice; this is the practice in several OGP members with justice commitments in their action plans.

## 6.3. OGP Local

The OGP Local strategy seeks to support strategic national-local collaboration to promote reforms across levels of government, including through the national OGP action plan processes.

### 6.3.a. Strategic Inclusion of Local Commitments within the National Action Plan

To ensure the national action plan remains strategic as well as manageable in its implementation and assessment, it is recommended that commitments that involve local jurisdictions (are implemented by local governments) meet the following criteria:

- **The commitment seeks to implement a state-wide open government policy.** Some member countries are pursuing open state strategies which involve defining and implementing open government policies that span institutions and levels of government. These commitments, which require the coordination and collaboration across government levels and institutions, can benefit from the co-creation and coordination space offered by the OGP platform.
- **The commitment seeks to promote coordination across levels of government on an open government policy.** In some cases, the same open government policy cannot be implemented across government levels; however, national and local governments may wish to implement their own open government policies in a coordinated fashion. In this case, commitments that enable and promote cross-jurisdictional coordination would benefit from being included as part of the national action plan.
- **The commitment seeks to advance implementation by local jurisdictions of national level policies.** In cases where local jurisdictions have to observe national regulations, a commitment to improve such observance may be beneficial, especially if the commitment is co-created with stakeholders from the local government and civil society.
- **The commitment seeks to raise awareness of open government in local jurisdictions.** In cases where the national government wishes to promote open government within local jurisdictions through knowledge sharing, these specific activities can be included in the action plan. This can include the creation of networks to share experiences and innovations in open government between national and local governments and civil society organizations.

- **The commitment highlights innovations on open government at the local level.** Innovations in open government often come from the local level. One way for the national government and civil society to support these efforts is by including them as specific commitments in the action plan. Commitments of this form should curate ambitious open government initiatives that have high potential for impact and can be adapted and adopted by other local jurisdictions.

### 6.3.b. Minimum Requirements for Commitments by Local Governments in the Action Plan

As national governments and civil society embark in the co-creation of action plans, they should ensure that:

- Commitments are co-created between government and civil society as part of the action plan development process;
- Commitments have a local scope, but derive from national policies or a nationally-led program, as outlined in the examples above. Commitments, therefore, are regularly monitored by the MSF, with progress reported at least every quarter in line with OGP standards and minimum requirements; and
- Commitments in the action plan implemented by local jurisdictions must not be duplicated in OGP local action plans in cases where the local jurisdiction is a member of OGP Local.

If any of these requirements are not met for commitments under consideration, it is suggested that these activities are included in a chapter on additional open government initiatives.

### 6.3.c. Inclusion of Local Open Government Efforts as Additional Initiatives in the Action Plan

In cases where local open government commitments do not meet the guidance above, they can still be highlighted 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. The initiatives can be showcased and shared with the open government community worldwide.

### 6.3.d. Knowledge and Learning

Peer learning and sharing is one of the fundamental pillars of the global open government community. The role of governments and civil society involved in the national OGP exercises is fundamental in the support of new, local jurisdictions, bringing relevant context and experience. There are several entry points in OGP Local for nationals to support new local members: mentorship, regional focus support, thematic support, training materials and guidance, and events and learning circles.

As demand increases for local governments to adopt open government reforms, it is important that the national action plan continues to be a strategic roadmap for open government reform by OGP countries. In order to achieve this, it is suggested that open government commitments that involve local jurisdictions follow the guidelines about the type of commitments more suitable for inclusion in national action plans. In addition, local open government commitments should follow the same minimum requirements of co-creation, monitoring, and reporting as national level commitments. Lastly, the national action plan can highlight both national and local initiatives, which are not commitments, but nevertheless deserve to be highlighted and shared with the open government community.

# 7. Minimum Participation Requirements and Acting Contrary to Process

A government's participation in OGP may be reviewed by the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee (C&S) or by the full Steering Committee upon recommendation by the C&S, if it acts contrary to process or contrary to OGP principles, as outlined in the [Procedural Review](#) policy. These are considered the minimum participation requirements for all OGP participating governments.

A country is considered to have acted contrary to process when any of the following actions apply:

- The government does not publish an action plan within 12 months after the end date of their last action plan (as covered in Section 3.1).
- The government does not meet the minimum requirements established in the Participation and Co-Creation Standards as assessed by the IRM. These are:
  - **1.1** A space for ongoing dialogue with participation from both government and civil society members, and other non-governmental representatives as appropriate that meets regularly (at least every six months) is established. Its basic rules on participation are public (see in [Section 1](#)).
  - **2.1** A public OGP website dedicated to the members' participation in OGP is maintained (see [Section 5](#)).
  - **2.2** A publicly available document repository on the OGP online site which provides access to documents related to the OGP process, including, at a minimum, information and evidence of the co-creation process and of the implementation of commitments is maintained and regularly updated at least twice a year (see [Section 5](#)).
  - **3.1** The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, publishes on the OGP website/webpage the co-creation timeline and overview of the opportunities for stakeholders to participate at least two weeks before the start of the action plan development process (see [Section 2.1](#)).
  - **3.2** The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, conducts outreach activities with stakeholders to raise awareness of OGP and opportunities to get involved in the development of the action plan (see [Section 2.1](#)).
  - **3.3** The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, develops a mechanism to gather inputs from a range of stakeholders during an appropriate period of time for the chosen mechanism. (as covered in [Section 2.1](#)).
  - **4.1** The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, documents and reports back or publishes written feedback to stakeholders on how their contributions were considered during the development of the action plan. (see [Section 2.1](#)).
  - **5.1** The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, holds at least two meetings every year with civil society to present results on the implementation of the action plan and collect comments (see [Section 4](#)).
- The government fails to make progress on the implementation of any of the commitments in the country's action plan as assessed by the IRM.

When a country is found to have acted contrary to process, the OGP Support Unit will notify the government via a letter that is published in the OGP website and in the OGP Gazette. If a country acts contrary to the process for two consecutive action plan cycles, it will be placed under Procedural Review by the C&S. More information about the Procedural Review protocols and cases is available [here](#).

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