

OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards

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Effective 1 January 2022

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is based on the idea that an open government is more accessible, more responsive, and more accountable to citizens, and that improving the relationship between people and their government has long-term benefits for everyone. OGP is a global partnership that includes members at the national and local level and thousands of civil society organizations, working together to co-create action plans with concrete reforms – commitments – across a broad range of issues. This unique model of public participation aims to ensure that civil society has a role in shaping and overseeing governments. Furthermore, as OGP has developed, partnerships among open government champions inside and outside of government have become its driving force and one of its strongest results.

Thus, collaboration between government, civil society and other stakeholders (e.g., citizens, civil society organizations, government departments, subnational 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 must consider and respond.

These Participation and Co-Creation Standards are intended to support this collaboration throughout all stages of the OGP action plan cycle, from development through to implementation and monitoring. They represent a consolidated version of the previous iteration of the standards into a simpler, more easily understandable set of standards which allow for greater flexibility and adaptability so that they can be applied to the diversity of situations across OGP contexts. They are not intended as detailed guidelines on running an OGP process but rather should be read and adopted alongside OGP's supporting material, which is available on the OGP website. Participating in the OGP is a continuous learning process.

Specifically, these Participation and Co-Creation Standards are designed for use by national governments, civil society, and other stakeholders to:

- Provide space and mechanisms for ongoing dialogue throughout the action plan cycle;
- Promote shared responsibility for action plan development and implementation between government and civil society;
- Encourage ambition and innovation by OGP members in the development of their action plans;



- Ensure a clear understanding of the minimum requirements expected of all OGP members in terms of participation and co-creation;
- Facilitate the assessment of compliance with the Standards for greater accountability and learning.

The final section of these Standards includes guidance on length and delivery date of the national action plans.

Guiding Principles for the Standards

There are four overarching principles that guide the application of Participation and Co-Creation Standards. These draw on the principles enshrined in the Open Government Declaration, which all OGP members endorse at the time of joining:

1. **Transparency:** Information regarding OGP processes, activities, decisions and outcomes should be easily accessible by any interested stakeholder. Proactively publish and disseminate information in the most relevant format and through the most appropriate means throughout the action plan cycle and provide regular progress updates on commitment development and implementation.
2. **Inclusive participation:** Allow for a diversity of voices to meaningfully participate in the OGP process, identify priorities, and propose solutions. Conduct outreach to minority or traditionally underrepresented groups and ensure access to information regarding the opportunities for participation and input.
3. **Accountability:** Provide clear information about the results of consultation processes and the outcomes of commitment implementation. They should explain, for example, why certain stakeholder priorities were not included as well as the reasons for any changes or delays during commitment implementation.
4. **Innovation and ambition:** Strive to go beyond the minimum requirements outlined here and innovate on ways to develop, co-create and implement ever more ambitious and transformative open government reforms via highly transparent, participatory and collaborative processes. **Minimum requirements should be seen as the starting point, not the goal.**

Structure of the Standards

To bring the above principles to life, the Standards are structured in a way that encourages members to strive for ambition, while ensuring that minimum requirements are met and exceeded where possible. Each Standard is structured as follows:

- **Ambition:** Why this Standard is important, and what an ambitious application of the Standard might look like.



- **Scope of application of the Standard:** Where in the OGP action plan cycle the Standard should be applied, namely: (i) during development of the action plan; (ii) during implementation and monitoring of the action plan; or (iii) throughout the action plan cycle.
- **Approaches on how to apply the Standard:** A set of approaches and best practices, informed by past experience and collective learning over the past 10 years of OGP, to support application of the Standard in a way that is flexible and can be adapted to different contexts and needs. Further guidance will be provided on the OGP website.
- **Minimum requirements for participation and co-creation:** Clear and measurable minimum requirements that all OGP national members must meet under the Standard.
- **Assessment of compliance with the Standard:** Criteria to be used by the OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) to report on progress made on applying each Standard by OGP national members. For compliance purposes, the IRM will determine if there is evidence of action toward meeting the minimum requirements in each case.

The 5 Participation and Co-creation Standards

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

Standard 1: Establishing a space for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between government, civil society, and other non-governmental stakeholders

Ambition: Ongoing dialogue between government and civil society (and other stakeholders as appropriate) is a core element of OGP membership. It is a critical element to build relationships and trust which can lead to increased sustainability and ability to overcome challenges. Collaboration is crucial to make open government work at all stages - from development to implementation and monitoring of reforms. It can help support the identification of issues of most concern to a diversity of citizens and promote joint problem-solving. Ultimately, it is at the heart of the democratic principle that citizens should have a say in the decisions that affect their lives, especially those who don't often have a seat at the table.



Having an established space (or platform) for ongoing dialogue and collaboration for those involved in the development and implementation of OGP action plans has been found to be positively correlated with higher completion rates of commitments and stronger early results. Depending on their mandate, composition and structure, such platforms can empower civil society and foster shared responsibility for ambition of commitments and shared accountability for implementation between government and civil society. They can also act as a bridge between citizens and government reformers to help inform action plan design, implementation and monitoring.

Several countries have established formal multi-stakeholder forums (MSFs), commissions or secretariats that lead the OGP processes, although other less formal structures are also possible. More advanced models have clear rules about membership, decision-making processes and selection procedures for MSF members, often with an even balance of governmental and civil society representatives and other stakeholders and even joint chairing. In several cases, it is the MSF that leads the OGP process, with the participation of high-level representatives with decision-making authority from government and a strong role for civil society in the development of commitments (and their implementation, where applicable). Whatever the set-up, the MSF should not be an elite group but drawn from as wide a constituency as possible. This may mean engaging both traditional government and organizational partners as well as broadening the base of participation to proactively include groups such as women, youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+ or indigenous communities, or other historically underrepresented groups who may have different needs or insights critical to shaping proposed government reforms.

Scope of application: Throughout the action plan cycle.

Based on OGP experience and collective learning, below are a subset of approaches that OGP members are encouraged to follow where possible:

- A multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) or other space for dialogue (platform) between government and civil society is established to guide the OGP process in a country.
- The MSF/platform is inclusive and structured in a way that no constituency, government or civil society is over- or underrepresented.
- There are clear, published rules on selection processes for membership, decision-making, and external accountability mechanisms for the platform.
- Members of the MSF/platform meet regularly (at least every 6 months).
- The MSF/platform proactively communicates and reports back on its activities, decisions, and results to wider government and civil society stakeholders (see Standard 4).
- The MSF/platform has the necessary mandate (e.g., presidential decree, memoranda, etc.) to advance the OGP process and should strive to make the decision-making process pertaining to the OGP process as inclusive as possible.



- The government point of contact, in consultation with civil society, defines and coordinates participation of other government actors in the MSF/platform.
- Civil society members of the MSF/platform are selected through a fair and transparent process which is led by civil society members themselves.
- Establish ways for other non-governmental stakeholders, such as academia and the private sector to engage with the OGP process.
- Opportunities for remote participation are provided for at least some meetings and events to enable the inclusion of groups unable to attend in person.
- The MSF/platform is representative and structured in a way that actively encourages meaningful participation of underrepresented groups such as women, youth, or persons with disabilities, keeping in mind that participation could be limited by lack of ability to travel or access the internet. Conducting a gender or diversity assessment may be useful in understanding which groups may have more or less access and influence over the process and inform an outreach strategy.

Minimum requirements

OGP recognizes that each country has specific context needs and may adapt its OGP process accordingly. The guidelines offer multiple approaches to meeting the Standard. However, at a minimum, all OGP members are expected to comply with:

- 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.

Assessment of compliance with the Standard

**The IRM will develop this section once the Standards are approved by C&S.*

Standard 2: Providing open, accessible and timely information about activities and progress within a member’s participation in OGP.

Ambition: 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 specifically (see Standards 3 and 5).



Information should be provided in such a way that it can be understood quickly and easily, reducing barriers to participation in OGP processes and levelling the playing field. Information should be provided throughout the whole action plan cycle with regular updates provided on progress of commitment development as well as implementation.

Scope of application: Throughout the action plan cycle.

Based on OGP experience and collective learning, below are a subset of approaches that OGP members are encouraged to follow where possible:

- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, maintains a public OGP website (or OGP subsite/web page on a government website) which is searchable.
- Relevant information on the OGP process is published on the OGP website/webpage, including but not limited to information about leading and participating government agencies, contact information, OGP processes and opportunities for participation, meeting agendas and minutes, and all other relevant documents.
- The lead agency and government point of contact for OGP are clearly identified and their contact information is publicly available on the OGP website/webpage.
- Where possible, information about the civil society organizations that participate in the MSF should be publicly available.
- The government publishes information and documents in non-technical language that is understandable to the widest possible extent of the general population, using relevant online and offline engagement tools.
- The government publishes key OGP information and documents in all administrative languages, and considers additional steps to make the information accessible by those with visual or auditory impairment as appropriate.
- The government publishes via the OGP website/webpage regular updates (at least every six months) on the progress of commitment implementation, including progress toward milestones, reasons for any delays, next steps (see Standard 5).
- The government, where relevant, publishes information related to process and commitment completion in machine-readable, reusable, open formats.
- The OGP website/webpage has a feature to allow the public to comment on progress updates.

Minimum requirements

OGP recognizes that each country has specific context needs and may adapt their OGP process accordingly. The guidelines offer multiple approaches to meeting the Standard. However, at a minimum, all OGP members are expected to comply with:

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



- 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).

Assessment of compliance with the Standard

**The IRM will develop this section once the Standards are approved by C&S.*

Standard 3: Providing inclusive and informed opportunities for public participation during development of the action plan

Ambition: Evidence from 10 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. In order 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 in the definition of 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).

Government points of contact should offer advance and equal access to information regarding the rules of participation, timelines and background documents to ensure participants are well informed to provide input or participate in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the co-creation process should try to incorporate appropriate methods of public participation for gathering inputs from each group of stakeholders, engage in dialogue or work together (general public, experts, government agencies, donors, underrepresented groups, minorities, grassroot organizations, private sector, etc.) which are made available for an adequate duration. This may include thematic working tables led by experts from government and civil society, or other non-governmental actors as appropriate, written feedback, online discussions, surveys, face-to-face or remote meetings. Meetings are conducted at times and in locations that maximize the chance of broader participation.

Scope of application: During the development of the action plan.



Based on OGP experience and collective learning, below are a subset of approaches that OGP members are encouraged to follow where possible:

- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, develops a co-creation timeline outlining clear stages of the process, roles and expectations.
- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, develops a methodology for the co-creation process that considers steps to raise awareness, ensure participation of diverse actors, gather inputs, process information, build commitment proposals, get final approvals, and finalize the decision-making process.
- The co-creation process includes a combination of open in-person meetings and online engagement adapted to the country context to enable remote participation for maximum inclusivity. Keep in mind that the digital gap in a given context may inhibit some participation, so this combination of online and offline engagement may be needed to address gaps in access.
- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, conducts outreach activities with relevant stakeholders to raise awareness of open government, the OGP and opportunities to get involved. This may include face-to-face outreach and engagement events, which are open and accessible to any interested members of the public, civil society and other stakeholders to attend. MSFs may also consider recruiting individuals or organizations to serve as liaison 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 where established, or the government where there is no MSF, publishes, in advance, information on the timeline, methodology, and decision-making process (e.g., How will commitments be drafted? How will language be proposed? How will final decisions be made? etc.) and provides appropriate notice of events, draft commitments, and other relevant information to facilitate the participation of any interested stakeholders.
- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, should share an agenda and reading materials in advance (at least one calendar week) before any meeting where commitments or action plan drafts will be discussed or decided.

Minimum requirements

OGP recognizes that each country has specific context needs and may adapt their OGP process accordingly. The guidelines offer multiple approaches to meeting the Standard. However, at a minimum, all OGP members are expected to comply with:

- 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



- 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.

Assessment of compliance with the Standard

**The IRM will develop this section once the Standards are approved by C&S.*

Standard 4: Providing a reasoned response and ensuring ongoing dialogue between government and non-governmental stakeholders during co-creation of the action plan

Ambition: Reasoned response to stakeholder input and feedback has been shown to be highly correlated with ambition, completion, and early results. Evidence from more than 170 IRM reports shows that this is the best predictor of strong action plans. Providing a reasoned response as to why certain 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.

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 itself. 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.

Scope of application: During the development of the action plan.

Based on OGP experience and collective learning, below are a subset of approaches that OGP members are encouraged to follow where possible:

- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, facilitates a mechanism for direct communication with stakeholders to respond to process questions around the development of the action plan.
- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, publishes and disseminates all written contributions (e.g., consultation input as well as responses) to the



action plan development on the OGP website/webpage and via other appropriate channels.

- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, publishes a summary of stakeholder contributions to the action plan on the OGP website/webpage (regardless of whether they were accepted).
- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, assesses commitment proposals through an open and transparent process and publishes an overview of their response to proposals on the OGP website/webpage.
- Once commitments have been drafted, the MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, via the OGP website/webpage, presents its reasoning for the selection of commitments, including justifications for commitment proposals not adopted, and other feedback as appropriate.
- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, provides a range of options for stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft commitments and their rationale (e.g., written responses, online discussions, surveys, face-to-face or remote meetings) which are open for an adequate duration (at least 2 weeks). Where the co-creation process separates commenting from input-gathering, each of these phases should have at least this length.

Minimum requirements

OGP recognizes that each country has specific context needs and may adapt their OGP process accordingly. The guidelines offer multiple approaches to meeting the Standard. However, at a minimum, all OGP members are expected to comply with:

- 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.

Assessment of compliance with the Standard

**The IRM will develop this section once the Standards are approved by C&S.*

Standard 5: Providing inclusive and informed opportunities for ongoing dialogue and collaboration during implementation and monitoring of the action plan.

Ambition: Evidence from over 170 IRM reports shows that continued stakeholder dialogue and participation during the implementation process is highly correlated with high levels of completion and stronger results. This could include additional opportunities for civil society as



well as other non-government actors to comment and ask questions during the implementation of commitments beyond the formal annual meetings (see minimum requirements below).

Ongoing engagement can help maintain momentum for implementation once the initial buzz following the publication of the action plan has subsided. This could include engagement of relevant ministries and civil society as well as other non-government experts to maximize impact of commitments, including through peer-to-peer and other knowledge exchange activities.

Engaging a minister or other high-level representative at least once a year during implementation to discuss progress, delays and opportunities to address challenges can also help add impetus. It can help stakeholders hold the government, civil society or other partners accountable for results and encourage course correction if priorities or circumstances change.

In some cases, the MSF or governments have added “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 have had co-ownership over the implementation and reporting of commitments, sometimes via thematic working tables established during the action plan development stage (see Standard 3).

Scope of application: During the implementation and monitoring of the action plan.

Based on OGP experience and collective learning, below are a subset of approaches that OGP members are encouraged to follow where possible:

- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, holds open meetings or encourages 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.
- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, monitors and deliberates on how to improve the implementation of the action plan.
- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, maintains a public dashboard with up-to-date information on progress on implementation of commitments, delays and other relevant information to corroborate the document repository (see Standard 2).
- The MSF where established, or the government where there is no MSF, prepares a self-assessment report based on the information in the repository/dashboard once a year and holds at least a two-week public consultation to gather comments and feedback on the content of the report. This assessment could include reviewing commitments and implementation using inclusive analysis tools like a gender or diversity analysis to understand where there may be opportunities and gaps in citizen access or needs.



- The government, in collaboration with the MSF when possible, publishes the self-assessment report as well as all written comments and feedback received on the OGP website/webpage.

Minimum requirements

OGP recognizes that each country has specific context needs and may adapt their OGP process accordingly. The guidelines offer multiple approaches to meeting the Standard. However, at a minimum, all OGP members are expected to comply with:

- 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.

Assessment of compliance with the Standard

**The IRM will develop this section once the Standards are approved by C&S.*

Action plan length and delivery windows

The following outline the rules related to action plan length, delivery and assessment schedule. Further guidance is provided on the OGP website.

- **Action plan length.** Countries can decide to develop a two-year or a 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. The refresh period will be outlined in the new co-creation and participation Standards and will consist of a shortened version of the co-creation process that allows for updating, modifying or including commitments. The minimum requirements for the refresh period are 3.1 and 4.1 and will be assessed by the IRM.
- **Delivery windows.** Countries will be able to select from two implementation cycles that formally start on either June 30 or December 31, and that end on the same date two or four years after. To allow for greater flexibility, action plans can be delivered starting six months before and up to two months after the selected start date. Afterwards, a country would have to use the next delivery window.
- **Acting contrary to process due to delays.** Once these changes are approved, countries will be considered to have acted contrary to OGP process if they fail to deliver an action plan within one year after the completion of their previous action plan.

