

Fact Sheet: The Open Government Partnership

"In all parts of the world, we see the promise of innovation to make government more open and accountable. And now, we must build on that progress. And when we gather back here next year, we should bring specific commitments to promote transparency; to fight corruption; to energize civic engagement; to leverage new technologies so that we strengthen the foundations of freedom in our own countries, while living up to the ideals that can light the world."

--President Obama, September 23, 2010

The Challenge

In his address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2010, President Obama spoke of open economies, open societies, and open governments as the "strongest foundation for human progress." He recognized that the work of strengthening democratic government requires sustained commitment, and that countries around the world are taking innovative steps to better serve the people they represent. He issued a challenge to the leaders assembled in New York to gather together again in September of 2011 with specific commitments and plans of action to promote transparency, fight corruption, energize civil society, and to leverage new technologies.

Answering the Call

Responding to the President's challenge, a group of governments and civil society organizations spanning the globe have come together to form the [Open Government Partnership](#) (OGP), a new multilateral initiative that supports national efforts to promote transparency, fight corruption, strengthen accountability, and empower citizens. At the core of the Partnership is a commitment from participating countries to undertake meaningful new steps as part of a concrete action plan, developed and implemented in close consultation with their citizens.

Led in its first year by the United States and Brazil, OGP is a unique partnership with a steering committee composed of governments (Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and civil society organizations (Africa Center for Open Governance (Kenya), Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (Brazil), Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad (Mexico), International Budget Partnership (international), MKSS (India), National Security Archive (U.S.), Revenue Watch Institute (international), Transparency and Accountability Initiative (international), and Twaweza (Tanzania)).

The Launch of the Open Government Partnership

Today in New York, President Obama and President Rousseff hosted the formal launch of OGP at an event with Heads of State and senior officials from 46 countries. The high-level meeting focused attention on the shared challenge of improving governance, and demonstrated a strong political commitment around the world to the kinds of reforms necessary to enhance transparency, fight corruption, and strengthen mechanisms of democratic accountability.

The eight founding governments embraced an [Open Government Declaration](#) in which they pledged to advance the core principles of open government. And each government presented an action plan with concrete commitments to put the principles of the Declaration into practice.

The Partnership also welcomed the commitment of the following 38 governments to join OGP and deliver their own action plans in Brazil in March 2012: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Peru, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uruguay.

Each of these countries has already demonstrated a commitment to open government across four key areas – fiscal and budget transparency, freedom of information, asset disclosures for public officials, and citizen engagement – and published a formal letter of intent to participate.

The Open Government Declaration

The Declaration is a high-level political statement by the leaders of the eight founding governments of the value of openness, and their commitment to:

- Promote openness, because more information about governmental activities should be timely and freely available to people;
- Engage citizens in decision-making, because this makes government more innovative and responsive;
- Implement the highest standards of professional integrity, because those in power must serve the people and not themselves; and
- Increase access to new technologies because of their unprecedented potential to help people realize their aspirations for access to information and a more powerful voice in how they are governed.

Eight Action Plans

Today, as part of the formal launch, the eight founding governments delivered action plans pledging new commitments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness the power of new technologies. Each action plan contains detailed commitments in a wide variety of areas, developed by governments in consultation with citizens. Among the highlights, the action plans include commitments to promote:

- **Effective management of natural resources revenues:** The United States will join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) as an implementing country – forging a new partnership between government and industry to ensure that taxpayers receive every dollar they are due from the extraction of our natural resources. (You can view the full U.S. National Action Plan [here](#).)
- **Delivering public information:** Brazil will develop several activities toward increasing active transparency and open data, including restructuring the Transparency Portal and launching the Brazil Open Data Portal, in order to converge to the appropriate environment for future enactment of the Access to Information Law.
- **Gender equality:** Norway will promote gender equality and women’s full participation in civic life, the private sector, public administration and political processes, including by: following up the recommendations of the government white paper on equal pay; launching an effort to have more women apply for top posts in the private sector; and undertaking an initiative to strengthen the role of women in local democracy and develop a gender equality program with all municipalities.
- **Open data:** The United Kingdom will promote improvements in outcomes and accountability in the public sector by transforming the rights of citizens to obtain data from public authorities and establishing standards and frameworks to embed a culture of transparency in the UK.
- **Citizen participation:** The Philippines will extend participatory budgeting across the government to 12 government departments and 6 government corporations by 2012; establish an empowerment fund to support bottom-up involvement in development planning and budgeting; and institutionalize social audits as a tool for monitoring the implementation of public infrastructure projects.

- **Service delivery:** South Africa will enhance the capacity and capabilities of communities to access and claim their socio-economic rights through the roll-out of national public education campaigns and set up “Service Delivery Improvement Forums” in all nine provinces to provide timely citizen report cards on service delivery at the community level.
- **Public integrity:** Indonesia will pursue an ambitious effort to bring greater transparency to range of critical areas that have been sources of corruption in the public sector, with commitments to publish basic information and performance data for the police and public prosecution service, the tax court, the immigration office, the customs office, and the land administration office. They will also increase the transparency of civil service recruitment.
- **Government transparency:** Mexico will increase the publication of socially useful information in four key areas – budget allocation, security, education, and telecommunications – in order to strengthen public integrity and public participation, and to enhance the oversight of performance in the education sector to improve educational quality.

The Domestic Open Government Initiative

In addition to committing to implement EITI, among the highlights of the U.S. National Action Plan:

- The White House recently announced the launch of the “We the People” petition platform to give Americans a direct line to voice their concerns to the Administration via online petitions. In addition, the White House plans to publish the source code of the recently announced “We the People” petition platform so that it is available to any government around the world that seeks to solicit and respond to the concerns of the public. This will foster greater participation in government.
- The Administration will launch a platform called ExpertNet that will enable government officials to better communicate with citizens who have expertise on a pertinent topic. It will give members of the public an opportunity to participate in a public consultation relevant to their areas of interest and knowledge, and allow officials to pose questions to and interact with the public in order to receive useful and relevant feedback. ExpertNet will foster greater collaboration within government.

- The Administration will continue work on a new civil service personnel category (or job series) for officials who specialize in administering FOIA and other information programs. It is important to recognize the professional nature of the work done by those administering FOIA. In addition, the Administration will expand the use of technology to achieve greater efficiencies in FOIA administration, including utilization of technology to assist in searching for and processing records.
- Recently, Congress nearly enacted legislation that would eliminate loopholes in existing whistleblower protections, provide protections for employees in the intelligence community, and create pilot programs to explore potential structural reforms in the remedial process. The Administration will continue to work with Congress to enact this legislation. But if Congress remains deadlocked, the Administration will explore options for utilizing executive branch authority to strengthen and expand whistleblower protections.
- The Administration will launch an initiative that will recommend reforms and require reporting on current records management policies and practices. The initiative will consider changes to existing laws and ask how technology can be leveraged to improve records management while making it cost-effective. The initiative will seek a reformed, digital-era, governmentwide records management framework that promotes accountability and performance.

Brazil 2012 and Beyond

Six months from now, on March 5th and 6th, 2012, Brazil will host the second high-level meeting of OGP. A group of countries – including the 38 who expressed their formal intent to participate today – will endorse the Open Government Declaration and deliver their own action plans to strengthen the pillars of open and accountable government.

The founding governments are committed to continuing the Partnership beyond Brazil, with commitments from the United Kingdom, Indonesia, and Mexico to chair the effort in subsequent years. OGP will work actively to expand the ranks of participating countries, engage civil society and the private sector, and to help countries deliver meaningful reforms that increase government accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency.

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