

Application

Participant: Ghana Team

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS:

As you consider which initiative to put forward for the Open Government Awards, please consider the following questions:

(1) Does the initiative seek to improve a public policy or service?

Yes No

(2) If yes, does the initiative seek to improve the ability of citizens to provide feedback and/or to make decisions in the design or implementation of a policy or service? For examples of initiatives, see: <http://www.opengovguida.com/topics/citizen-engagement>

Yes No

If you have answered "Yes" to BOTH of these questions, please proceed with your application.

A. THE TEAM

The following information is required to capture a basic understanding of those responsible for your initiative and any partnerships that have helped you to meet your goals.

INITIATIVE NAME (required)

Provide the name of the initiative that your team is submitting for consideration by the judges of the 2014 Open Government Awards (under the inaugural theme, Citizen Engagement). If the initiative is operating under one or more alternate name(s), provide the name that is most commonly recognized.

Ghana Open Data Initiative

THE NOMINATION (required)

Begin by describing how this initiative was selected. For example, mention any nomination or consultation process held with civil society partners or others when selecting the initiative. Please offer your explanation of this process in 200 words or less.

The initiative was selected by the Ghana Open Government Partnership Steering Committee. The initiative was selected at SC meeting as the most advanced initiative for citizen's feedback in the Technology and Innovation thematic area of OGP.

GOVERNMENT POINT OF CONTACT (required)

Provide the name and title of a single point of contact for the purposes of communicating with your team.

The person should be the most senior individual responsible for overseeing the application submission. Provide the phone number(s), email address(es), and physical address of your designated point of contact.

You may provide alternate contact information, if it is a direct means for reaching the designated point of contact.

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CIVIL SOCIETY POINT OF CONTACT (strongly recommended)

We strongly encourage applicants to submit a joint application from a government agency and a civil society partner. If submitting a joint application, please provide the name and title of a single point of contact at the partner organization. If not, please be sure to focus on the "validation of claims" in Section B (see pg. A-3).

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MEMBER OF GHANA OGP SC

OTHER PARTNERSHIPS (optional)

If you are partnering with one or more other government agencies, private sector entities, media, or other organizations, please list each partner. In 250 words or less, provide a brief narrative of the partnership, including the roles that each partner assumes in the initiative.

The Ghana Open Data Initiative has partnered with three private sector to develop further the portal: CERSGIS (<http://cersgis.org/>) to develop GIS data collections and applications development; Cell Afrique (<http://cellafrique.net/>) a mobile apps developer to facilitate development of mobile apps and Odekro (Odekro.org) and open parliament apps developer to leverage synergies on the two platforms. GODI is working to partner with WASEN (<http://wasenghana.org/>) a social entrepreneurship CSO to assist the project in its citizen participation program.

B. THE INITIATIVE

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is prepared to celebrate a range of successful applicants to the Open Government Awards. This year's theme is "citizen engagement." To qualify for recognition, we need to understand the various elements of success for your initiative and its sustainability over time.

PROBLEM DEFINITION (required)

In 200 words or less, please identify the specific problem your initiative intended to solve. Why was this problem important to solve at a particular time and for the particular context in which you are working?

The Ghana Open Data Initiative was started to address the chronic non-availability of government data in open format for use by citizens and businesses. The initiative was envisaged to engage citizens through data that is open by soliciting feedback and as a result improve government administrative efficiency. The initiative was also envisaged on inception to promote accountability and transparency

TARGET POPULATION (required)

In 100 words or less, please identify the target population who may benefit from this initiative. Highlight your understanding of the needs or demands of the target population that were addressed by your initiative.

The target population who will benefit from the initiative are citizens and business that use data for research and analysis as well as civil society organizations who need data for their advocacy work for citizens empowerment. Through development of applications, the general population was a prime target. For instance, an application on health facilities datasets to locate nearest facility in event of an accident

INITIATIVE DESIGN (required)

In 350 words or less, describe your initiative's goals and objectives. Focus specifically on how the initiative was designed to meet those objectives. For example, identify stage(s) of the policy/service design or implementation when you solicited citizen participation. What kind of participation did you seek from citizens (e.g., feedback, consultation, joint decision-making, monitoring of activities, etc.)?

Explain why this particular approach was best suited to achieve the initiative's goals. How did you encourage citizens to participate? Describe any innovations in the design of the initiative.

The main objectives are:

►To provide a central platform for access to open data

►To bring about the development of the public data community

►To promote participation between government, civil society organizations and the citizen

►To serve as a concrete action plan of the fourth thematic area of the Open Government Partnership (technology and innovation) for the republic of Ghana.

►To promote transparency, accountability and efficiency in government through citizen feedback

In 2012 when the initiative began, there was no open data community (both demand side and supply side). Our initial focus was to develop an open data community and involve the community to be involved in the development of the open data portal. A steering committee made of government, civil society, academic and developers was set up at the onset. Group consultation with CSO organizations, application developers, researchers and the general public to understand the their requirements of data. We opted to develop the portal in house using the Open Government Platform source code developed by the US and Indian OGD teams. So we went through all the challenges but we now have a portal built in house with over 890 datasets. Our approach was to harvest low hanging fruits and then continue to collect data that is useful to the different groups who use open data.

The portal is a fully fledged data catalog which has ability to empower users to rate datasets, comment on or request for new datasets where they are absent and above all send feedback to agencies. Now that we have a decent portal, we are embarking on an outreach to get more citizens and businesses to use the portal. We have signed an MOU with the Ghana Library Authority to make all libraries access point. We are embarking on a regional roadshow to create awareness and we are partners on the TV show "e-Awareness Platform" where we are educating citizens about the platform. We are also planning to have hackathons to develop more applications for use by citizens

INITIATIVE OUTCOMES (required)

In 250 words or less, describe the intended outcomes and the actual outcomes that the initiative achieved. Who were the ultimate beneficiaries, and what benefits did they experience? For example, list any concrete improvements in policy, services, behaviors, or power relations between the government and citizens. Try to present your case from the perspective of the various stakeholders involved (e.g., your agency, citizens, Civil Society Organizations, media, et al.). If there are any baseline indicators or standards to measure the outcomes of the initiative, such as the breadth of depth of engagement, please describe them in detail.

Our intended outcome was to create over a period of two years starting 2012 an open data community who will contribute actively to the development of an open data portal. Through the steering community, we reached out to different communities who have informed us on what the data needs are and we now have an open data portal (DATA.GOV.GH) that is used reasonably by the community. You may find usage statistic here : <http://data.gov.gh/visitorstats/monthly-visitor-statistics>

Citizens are accessing application we developed over datasets on the portal; data users are also downloading datasets for their respective uses (<http://data.gov.gh/visitorstats/monthly-download-trends>). We have began another round of consultation to move to the next level. We recently has a CSO meetup to discuss the initiative and seek further direction on datasets.

INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY (required)

In 200 words or less, please describe any plans for scaling up and/or sustaining the initiative in the future. Base your description of the strategy on information provided in the previous sections, such as how you intend to leverage your current success and increase your reach or capacity. Address any threats or operational challenges to your initiative and describe how you intend to manage those risks on a regular basis.

Our next stage is to enhance the features of the portal through upgrades and incorporation of semantic data to make that datasets more and more useful for evidence based decision making by Government Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs), increase datasets on the portal to about 10,000 by close of 2015 and setup an open data center to train apps developers and data managers on open data. The threat to the project has been the lack of funding from the government to the project. Thankfully, the Government in its eTransform program has earmarked USD 1m for open data to be available in 2015 which will help us do the basic. We will for more support to make our proposed Open Data Center an African center of excellence on Open Data.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS (required)

While it is strongly encouraged that each initiative includes partners, such as Civil Society Organizations, private sector agencies, media entities, etc., it is not a requirement. However, you are required to secure and upload documents from one or more credible nongovernmental actors who can attest to the veracity of any claims made in your application.

You are only allowed to upload one file. If you have multiple documents, please zip them into a single file first. The file types that are allowed to be uploaded have an extension of .ZIP, .PDF, .DOC, .DOCX, .XLS or .XLSX.

Letter of Validation GODI.pdf

C. THE PITCH

The following information allows each applicant to make their strongest (and final) case for consideration.

BEST CASE (required)

In 250 words or less, please present the most compelling facts for why your initiative should be recognized. This is an opportunity to distinguish your initiative, based on any factors that you have not had the opportunity to describe in the previous sections.

What is your best argument for why your initiative has achieved a meaningful outcome? What elements of the initiative make it different and better than others, that have been tried and tested? Be creative and concise.

An open data portal build by Ghanaian for the open data community today exist in Ghana with 878 datasets. This was not conceivable before the formal launch of the OGP initiative in 2011. We have an ever growing Open data community that is shown from the number of downloads monthly (see above). We are partners to a Digital TV program that is showcasing e-governance and citizens participation using technology and innovation and the general public is gradually walking up to the enormous potential that the portal brings along for accountable governance as citizens can send feedback to government on the portal. This an example of an Initiative driven by passion to ensure that citizen can engage government on the issues of governance as no funding has been found for this project yet. Today the GODI portal which the best on the African continent is a shining example that Africa is able to join the Open Government Partnership movement in the technology and innovation area. I recommend to the judges that Ghana deserve to win an award and I humbly submit our application for your kind consideration.

VIDEO SUBMISSION (recommended*)

OGP does not offer a venue for applicants to meet our judges during the application process. In order to provide the opportunity for making a personal connection, you are encouraged to upload a short video to complement your application. You may also depict an individual participant in your initiative and describe his or her experience. We do not need to know actual names or personal details. Take this opportunity to tell a story, to connect with our panel of experts, so that they might better understand your attention to specific needs.

Video submissions should follow these guidelines:

Maximum length of 3-4 minutes.
Please focus on personal presentations; it's not necessary to develop a sophisticated or polished video.

Here are some logistical and technical suggestions:

Video cameras, digital cameras, and phones are easy ways to record a video.
Laptop and desktop computers can typically record video through Skype or other software.

If possible, set to a low resolution to reduce file size. This will enable an easier video uploading process.

If you are having difficulty uploading the video file, try logging out of the application and logging back in using another Internet browser.

Here are general suggestions for delivering a high-quality video pitch:

Include the following:
Introduce yourself and your initiative.
Focus on describing your intended benefits and/or services and how they have been effective.

What is unique about your initiative, partners, or technical approach?
Hone your content:
Keep your description and language simple.
Demonstrate passion through your words and enthusiasm.

*If the burden of developing a video presentation is either prohibitive or might not reflect the best characterization of your initiative, then you are not required to submit one, and the judges are instructed not to discount your application because it may not include a video. We hope that this option offers a new and inventive way in which you can best express the results of your work.