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OPEN GOVERNMENT
AWARDS

Open
Government
Partnership

20 MARCH 2014

OGP Participating Countries:

RE: Invitation to Submit an Application to the Open Government Awards

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is launching an annual awards program to recognize excellence among participating countries and civil society organizations. The Open Government Awards will celebrate a different theme each year. For this inaugural year in 2014, our theme is "citizen engagement."

The attached **Briefing Materials** provide you with a detailed description of the Awards program, so that you may begin to identify the most appropriate initiatives for consideration. Please review them carefully and do not hesitate to contact Munyema Hasan (munyema.hasan@opengovpartnership.org) with any questions. We are also including the Application (see **A-1**) and other detailed explanations of the participation process.

Over the next four to six weeks, we encourage you to identify the most appropriate team to complete your application. **On April 15th, we will launch a dedicated website, www. opengovawards.org, where other details will be provided and where your team can register, log-in, and begin completing the application.** You will be provided a specific PASSWORD in advance of the website launch, which you can share with your team, so that they may participate and communicate with other registered teams.

Before turning your attention to the attached details of the program, I would like to explain a couple of decisions that we faced when designing the Open Government Awards.

First, in this initial year (as we learn the ropes and build momentum), we have decided to limit the applicant pool to one entry per OGP participating country. This will ensure that we have sufficient time and resources to organize an extremely credible and transparent selection process, where each application is reviewed and scored by five judges, and all feedback is made public. In the future, with some experience under our belts and the basic infrastructure in place, we will seriously consider expanding the number of participants.

Second, we are now prepared to answer the more difficult question of what initiatives should be eligible to apply. As a multi-stakeholder partnership, the OGP's success depends on the full engagement and participation of both government and civil society. Therefore, the question was whether we should invite submissions from government, from civil society, or from both. This was not an easy decision, so it is important to explain our thought process.
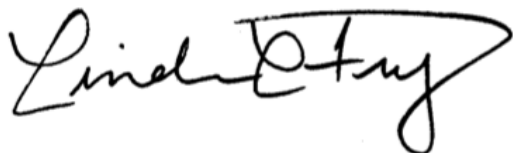
Our guiding principle for the 2014 Open Government Awards is that every initiative must demonstrate a real and sustainable shift in the government's approach to engaging citizens. In other words, while we certainly hope to encourage and reward innovation, this year's prize is not solely about innovation – it is about results. While one approach to engaging citizens might start with an innovative program run by a non-governmental organization, that program will only have a lasting impact on government-citizen relations, if there are champions within government who work to institutionalize and sustain it. Our aim this year is to recognize those government reformers who are taking risks and finding creative ways to open up the doors of government to citizen input and oversight.

We have therefore decided that for this year's theme, a government agency should be responsible for submitting each application and making a compelling case that their initiative is effectively engaging citizens AND is being institutionalized within government. The application process includes the following elements to help judges verify that an initiative is viewed as credible and effective:

1) Governments are strongly encouraged to consult with civil society when selecting initiatives for consideration. The application specifically asks governments to explain how they sought broader input before identifying an initiative, and this will be considered when scoring each application.
2) Governments are strongly encouraged to submit a joint application with one or more civil society partners. The application also requires at least one letter of validation by a civil society organization.
3) The panel of judges for the Open Government Awards will include an equal number of government and civil society reviewers, to ensure that both perspectives influence final selections.

We eagerly look forward to receiving your applications and hope your participation will make for a dynamic and inspiring inaugural year of the Open Government Awards.

Sincerely,

Linda Frey, Executive Director
Open Government Partnership Support Unit

In October of 2013, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) announced the launch of a new program, The Open Government Awards (Awards), at the London Summit. In 2014, the OGP is asking participating countries to nominate initiatives that expand and sustain "citizen engagement" to improve government policies and services. The OGP defines citizen engagement as:

" *… the mechanism(s) by which citizens participate in and have influence on the design and implementation of public policy and services, with the ultimate goal of making government more open, responsive, and accountable to their needs."*

The theme was decided after securing broad consensus across the OGP Steering Committee, that the inaugural year of the awards should focus on a principle that is at the core of the OGP model. Therefore, we are challenging each of you to showcase *how your governments are OPEN to citizen input and oversight.*

THERE ARE THREE MAIN REASONS
WHY WE ARE ASKING YOU TO ACCEPT THIS CHALLENGE:

GET
GLOBAL RECOGNITION

Opening up government to citizen input and oversight is not easy and is not always popular. This is your chance to be recognized internationally for your efforts and to build political support for sustaining effective initiatives.

SHARE
YOUR EXPERIENCE

The OGP was founded on the premise that good ideas and innovation can come from everywhere. Help us realize this vision by sharing your experience with your peers from around the world and showcasing a broad range of successes.

MOBILIZE
POLITICAL COMMITMENT

Advocates of reform, both from within and outside of government, can use this Awards program as an incentive to motivate senior officials to undertake ambitious and innovative initiatives.

2014
OPEN GOVERNMENT
AWARDS

NOMINATION PHASE

20 MARCH 2014

Distribution of
Briefing Materials

SUBMISSION PHASE

15 APRIL 2014

Official Site Launch at
www.opengovawards.org

30 MAY 2014

Registration Deadline

ADMIN & JUDGING

27 JUNE 2014

Application Deadline

FINAL RESULTS

21 JULY 2014

Completion of Scoring

EVENT PLANNING

LATE JULY 2014

Notification to Winners
by the OGP

SEPTEMBER 2014

Open Government Awards
Ceremony

The purpose of this communication is to give each country additional time to consider which initiative to nominate for the 2014 Awards.

The OGP strongly encourages you to screen potential initiatives through a nominations process that includes civil society organizations and others. Within the next four to five weeks, we hope that you will complete the nomination process and identify the team responsible for submitting your application. On April 15th, we will activate the website, www.opengovawards.org, allowing your team to register and log-in, where they will access an online version of the application.

To register and begin the participation process, you will be provided with a unique PASSWORD, assigned only to your country, which you can use to activate your team through the website.

Your team will have until May 30th to register online and confirm that your country will submit an application to the 2014 Awards. The deadline for submitting your complete application is June 27th, 2014. However, to ensure your team has sufficient time to complete the application, we would strongly encourage you to select your initiative and register online as soon as possible.

THE JUDGING PROCESS

To ensure that the Open Government Awards are fair and transparent, each team that complies with all of the application requirements will receive the attention of five credible judges, representing an equal mix of government and civil society experts. The number of judges assigned to each completed application is calculated, so that the results are statistically normalized, ensuring that everyone is treated fairly, no matter which judges they are assigned. The formula for normalizing those scores will be published on the website to ensure complete transparency.

As those judges are asked to score and comment upon each assigned application, they will use a common tool, a Trait Scoring Rubric (Rubric). The Rubric will be available for any interested party to view on the website. The Rubric will reflect the key principles described in these Briefing Materials. Also, each judge will be asked to assign one score for each criterion within the Rubric and to offer a comment explaining their justification for that score. Those comments will be available for each team to review, to increase accountability and to ensure that valuable feedback is provided to every participant.

As we consider how to ensure a fair and transparent participation process, the OGP remains committed to revealing the identities of the judges, the Rubric that each judge must use to score each completed application, and the exact requirements of the application (see A-1). Through this process, the OGP will deliver a program that celebrate categories of excellence, while also advancing a model of more open, transparent, and accountable partnerships.

Following the June 27th deadline for submitting applications, the OGP will undertake an Administrative Review of all submissions, to ensure that they are complete before they are distributed to a group of judges for scoring. Those judges will have ~3 weeks to score and comment upon every assigned application. Based upon those scores, a rank order of the applications will be provided to the OGP Support Unit. While the scores from the judges will be used to determine the top performers, the OGP may also consider where to make distinctions between categories of winners (e.g., tiers of recognition) and may also decide to honor certain candidates who score exceptionally well against particular criteria. Teams will be invited to attend a high-level event to honor the top performing initiatives and their partners. Coordination of the event will require planning with each team, and the target date for the event is during the third week of September in New York City (on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly meetings).

THE APPLICATION

There are three sections of the application for the Open Government Awards. To ensure that you have selected an appropriate initiative to submit, two preliminary questions and a link to reference materials are provided for guidance. Please read the entire application, so that you may understand the level of effort to complete this process. Here is a summary of the three sections:

SECTION A: THE TEAM
This section should take up to two pages of narrative text and provide a series of basic facts about the selected initiative and any associated partners responsible for submitting the application.

SECTION B: THE INITIATIVE
This section makes up the bulk of the application. There are seven required responses, which should take three to five pages, including a requirement to upload letters of endorsement to validate claims made in the application.

SECTION C: THE PITCH
This section allows applicants to present their most compelling case for why the initiative deserves to be recognized. It should take a maximum of one page, and it includes an optional video presentation of ~3-4 minutes.

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

To assess whether an initiative is eligible before starting the application, please consider the following:

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.opengovguide.com/topics/citizen-engagement/

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

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

☞ PLEASE NOTE: The following application details are provided in summary. The actual format of each section may appear different when it is viewed online. This copy is available to you, so that you can begin to select the most appropriate initiative. The final version will be available on April 15th at www.opengovawards.org (with no substantive changes).

SECTION 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.

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 100 words or less.

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.

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, title and email address 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).

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.

SECTION 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?

TARGET POPULATION (required)

In 200 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.

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.

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 or depth of engagement, please describe them in detail.

INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY (required)

In 150 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.

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.

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.

VIDEO SUBMISSION (recommended*)

The 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 resolution low 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 & 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.

*PLEASE NOTE: 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.