

Progress through Partnership

National-Local Collaboration to Advance Open Government

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Introduction

Today's challenges are complex. Tackling climate change, protecting democracy, and ensuring access to services require coordination. Finding practical solutions means working across society and at multiple levels of government.

Local governments are often at the forefront of tackling these challenges.¹ Local governments are responsible for policies and services that can have a tangible impact on citizens' lives. They can also be laboratories for innovation in governance. National governments need local governments to collectively tackle these major issues and ensure that policies are implemented. And local governments thrive when national policy supports collaboration, innovation, and credible implementation.

In the Open Government Partnership (OGP), national and local governments have worked together to solve difficult problems. For example, since the launch of OGP in 2011, members have used the action plan process to advance the principles of transparency, participation, public accountability, and inclusion at the national and local levels. To date, around 65 members have included at least one local commitment in a national action plan.

This note shares some key considerations based on practical experiences on how national governments can collaborate with local governments.

Note

This document is intended as a live resource that will be updated regularly as the OGP Support Unit strives to document practices for national-local collaboration on open government. If there are any inaccuracies or omissions in this document, please contact jose.marin@opengovpartnership.org. Similarly, if there are any additions you would like to make, please get in touch.

In 2024, the Support Unit is also commissioning in-depth case studies on some of the examples, with the aim of disseminating these in early 2025.

¹ OGP applies a broad definition of "local" government, which refers to any kind of government body operating below the level of the nation-state. This can include states, provinces, counties, and municipalities.

Objectives

How national and local governments collaborate should follow a shared objective. Multi-level collaboration may be useful for various purposes. Before deciding how to advance a particular policy, one should consider the particular aim of the reform process.

Standardization and compliance: Local governments may need to meet a standard set of practices, such as meeting open budget requirements.

EXAMPLES FROM OGP MEMBERS

The **Philippines** [sought to promote](#) good governance among local governments through the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) award program. The program encourages the proper utilization of public funds, the provision of exemplary services to local communities, and the promotion of transparency, accountability, and participation. The SGLG recognizes good performance among provincial, city, and municipal governments in areas of good financial housekeeping, disaster preparedness, and environmental management, among several others. Local governments are assessed against a benchmark set by the national government. This led to a decrease in the number of local government units with adverse findings from the Commission on Audit on issues related to budget allocations and responsiveness.

Canada [has worked](#) to align open data practices across all levels of government to the Open Data Charter's international standard.

Latvia [introduced](#) openness standards for municipalities to enhance transparency and public participation in budgetary and decision-making processes.

Scotland [has committed to](#) having at least one percent of its 32 Local Authority budgets subject to community choices budgeting.

Improving delegated implementation: Often, national governments partner with local governments to deliver basic services or regulate a sector.

EXAMPLES FROM OGP MEMBERS

Estonia [developed](#) an ICT tool for presenting and visualizing local governments' performance in a range of domains, targeting the public, local governments, and the central government. The public can use the tool to obtain information. Local governments can use it for management and planning interventions to improve service quality. Finally, the central government can use it to compare local municipalities and create policies, including making changes to funding allocations to address inequalities across local administrations.

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Indonesia [aimed to increase](#) the number of reports and the quality of resolutions on public services complaints through the LAPOR!-SP4N. The country developed a standard procedure for complaints to be followed by all public institutions and conducted training for local governments to meet requirements, among other measures.

The **Philippines** [expanded](#) the public's access to information by supporting local governments in passing "Freedom of Information" ordinances or executive orders.

Policy coherence and coordination: Multi-level governance is necessary to deal with complicated issues such as water resource management or transportation. There is a need to promote coherence so that different parts of government do not work at cross-purposes or create inefficiencies. Many commitments on national-local collaboration in OGP action plans pertain to meeting these objectives.

EXAMPLES FROM OGP MEMBERS

Colombia [coordinated](#) the publication of environmental data between environmental institutes, national authorities, and local agencies responsible for gathering and managing environmental information. The government also consolidated 17 subsystems of environmental information being managed by these entities under this commitment. The resulting restructured Colombian Portal of Environmental Information provides increased access to environmental information and has resulted in an increase of 73 percent in the number of portal views of the portal.

Italy [pursued](#) synergies on the publication of open data, with the national government adopting a national license for data publication and common standards. At the same time, the regions, autonomous bodies, and the City of Milan committed to enhancing the quality and quantity of released data in open formats through a "shared basket" of 10 useful datasets.

Santa Catarina in Brazil [provided](#) training on public procurement risk management and published a state-level protocol to align practices with national legislation on open contracting.

Promoting collaborative learning and capacity building: National and local governments stand to benefit from learning from each other's experiences and working together to address disparities in open government practices.

EXAMPLES FROM OGP MEMBERS

Argentina [co-created](#) the Open Government Federal Program, which consisted of online courses that provide concepts, tools, and methodologies to foster open government. The program included a national call for proposals for local governments to advance this approach through different projects that embedded citizen participation and provided technical assistance to support implementation.

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Ecuador [launched](#) a guide and website to support local governments in implementing open government and public innovation strategies. This was part of a broader effort led by the Association of Ecuadorian Municipalities. The association's work also included an assessment of local government capacities for open government and public innovation, a peer exchange to share best practices, and the development of communication and training strategies for local authorities and citizens, with support from government, civil society, and international partners.

Promoting local innovation and adaptation: National governments may wish to encourage innovation and sharing, especially when local solutions can address gaps caused by obstacles at the national level. Local governments may have other approaches to promoting access to justice. At the local level, the existence of different legal traditions and constituencies means that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate, as the case of Mexico illustrates below.

EXAMPLES FROM OGP MEMBERS

Tlalnepantla de Baz and **Mexico State** in Mexico committed to expanding access to justice through alternative dispute mechanisms.

The **German Federal Government** [implemented](#) 13 Regional Open Government Labs. These labs provide a framework for cooperation between local administrations and local stakeholders to co-create and implement open government initiatives. In total, the lab networks implemented 24 open government initiatives in more than 100 participating municipalities.

Colombia is developing [Citizen Laboratories for Public Innovation](#). In these spaces, local governments can solve local challenges using citizen participation, using strategies aligned with Territorial Development Plans and the National Development Plan. The national government will provide local governments with tools to improve their relationship with citizens, strengthen their management, and promote greater coordination between levels of government. To date, 14 local governments are participating in the laboratories.

These objectives and related initiatives may be pursued through stand-alone actions, national action plans, or as part of an open-state approach. An open-state approach encourages the executive, legislature, judiciary, independent public institutions, and multiple levels of government to collaborate, exploit synergies, and share good practices to promote transparency, integrity, accountability, and public participation as part of a formally or informally coordinated program.

Approaches and Design Choices

The way national governments engage local governments in their OGP process takes numerous forms. There are also varying degrees of coordination, local ownership, and autonomy involved. These are determined by national context, intra-governmental relationships, capacities, the level of maturity of the open government agenda, and the strengths of the spaces and networks available for coordination.

Coordinating implementation of policies that require separate actions across jurisdictions

Indonesia's “One Data Indonesia” project [involves](#) publishing standardized, centralized government-held data related to natural resources, the environment, and spatial planning. This requires linking data from the national and regional governments. The One Data project has been designed to allow different levels of government to work together by organizing roles, tasks, and responsibilities.

Inviting local governments and communities to set priorities for OGP national action plans

Armenia [engages](#) local governments and communities in town hall meetings to identify priorities for its national action plans.

Colombia has similarly adopted a comprehensive approach to co-creation, engaging stakeholders at the local level to ensure national initiatives adopted would resonate in the territories. The national government also invited local-led commitments in its [fourth](#) and [fifth](#) action plans.

Italy [opened](#) its 2019–2021 co-creation process to include local governments in the design and implementation of commitments. Representatives of interested local administrations joined the national co-creation process, with several commitments co-designed between the national government, local government, and civil society. The national government carried out a [major effort](#) to coordinate the co-creation of the plan between the central administration, representatives of local and regional authorities, and the Open Government Forum, representing about 100 organizations. As a result, regions, autonomous bodies, and cities jointly adopted commitments from the national action plan. Examples of commitments include publishing key datasets, improving access to information on the environment and public spending, and standardizing public contract information to align with open data standards.

Kenya has co-created its national action plan with local governments from Elgeyo Marakwet, Makueni, and Vihiga since 2018. These governments adopted commitments in the priority areas identified in the 2020–2022 action plan. As OGP Local members, Elgeyo Marakwet, Makueni, and Nandi have also aligned these national priority areas in their separate local action plans.

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In the **Republic of Moldova**, the national government collaborated with the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) and engaged local authorities to co-create the [2023–2025](#) national action plan. It contains commitments that will be implemented by both the national and local levels of government.

In the **Netherlands**, the national government collaborated with the [Association of Netherlands Municipalities](#) in the OGP action plan process, which led to ambitious open data commitments at the local level related to [local decision-making](#) and [complaints](#) about public services.

In **Ukraine**, for several years, representatives of the local communities have participated in the co-creation processes of the national action plans to advocate for reforms that impact their lives. The Association of Ukrainian Cities, UNDP, and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities have supported the engagement of the local communities in the OGP process.

Enabling commitments from local jurisdictions in the OGP action plan process

This can take several forms.

Multiple local jurisdictions adopting a single commitment, such as in **Lithuania**, where multiple levels of government [submitted](#) fiscal information to a new open data portal, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Finance with support from the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania. Other examples of this can be found in **Armenia**, where local participatory budgeting was [piloted](#) in four municipalities with the support of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, and **Georgia**, where eight municipalities [developed](#) similar strategies, action plans, and monitoring frameworks for open government with the support of development partners.

Multiple local jurisdictions adopting commitments to tackle the same problem, but without direct instruction from the national government in implementation. **Italy's** co-creation process for its 2019–2021 action plan described above led to local jurisdictions jointly implementing commitments in several areas. Another example of this is from **Germany**, where Schleswig Holstein and Berlin are both [collaborating](#) on linked open data through separate commitments in the 2023–2025 action plan.

Multiple jurisdictions each offering their separate commitments, such as in **Spain's** [fourth action plan](#). The action plan includes 53 open government initiatives from Spain's 19 autonomous communities and cities, and one from the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces. All initiatives address the thematic priorities established at the national level but are separately developed to ensure that the commitments address the needs of each local context.

Some OGP governments have opted to implement a nationwide approach to enabling commitments from local jurisdictions. Others have identified and initially included those local jurisdictions that have demonstrated a willingness to advance open government or meet other set criteria. Beginning with a few local governments or rolling out a policy or action across the country depends on several factors, such as the nature of the legal system, the maturity of the policy, and regional variation. For those beginning with the participation of a few local jurisdictions, participation by the latter can be voluntary or through a competitive process. Competitive processes are helpful when many jurisdictions are willing to take part, but there are limited resources to support their efforts. Different mechanisms are also adopted to promote participation by local governments and civil society, such as devising incentive programs that provide recognition or making participation a precondition for access to other programs.

For commitments in national action plans that focus on a few local governments, it is important to consider whether the national action plan can be leveraged to scale up results, treating initial commitments as pilots that can be replicated across the country.

Supporting the scaling of local open government beyond OGP action plans

Argentina co-created the [Open Government Federal Program](#) to advance the implementation of the government's open-state strategy. Before this program, the development of transparency, participation, and accountability practices were quite disparate at the local level. Key challenges included the lack of coordination between different levels of government and with civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as the absence of sufficient resources. Such challenges made it difficult to adopt open government reforms at the local level on a large scale. The program aimed to address these challenges by providing online courses on concepts, tools, and methodologies to foster open government. The program also launched a national call for proposals for local governments to implement open government projects. The co-creation of the [commitment](#) to launch this program was done at the national level within the national multi-stakeholder forum. The commitment included, as a first milestone, the participatory design of the Open Government Federal Program, which included the engagement of provincial and municipal governments and civil society. Local governments that responded to the call for proposals received technical assistance to implement projects that embedded public participation in their design or implementation. The program has been expanded across multiple OGP national action plan cycles.

Supporting the scaling of local open government beyond OGP action plans

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Chile developed an [Open Government Model](#) for the local level. A permanent commission was formed with seven municipalities (Cerro Navia, Peñalolén, Providencia, Recoleta, Santo Domingo, Talagante, and Vitacura), two CSOs (Chile Transparente and Fundación Ciudadanía Inteligente), and the Council for Transparency for the overall coordination of the process. Together, they reviewed, compiled, and systematized municipal Open Government experiences, practices, and initiatives at the international and national level. Such systematization served as a basis for the preliminary formulation and operationalization of the model. The commission co-designed a proposed model for open government at the local level, with civil society and expert input. Indicators were defined for each dimension of the model, and instruments were designed to diagnose the status of the municipalities for each dimension. The results of the diagnostic assessments and the Council's recommendations were the basis for developing local action plans. The plans responded to the priorities that each municipality determined for itself and formed the basis for later self-reporting.

As part of its [2019–2021](#) national action plan, **Germany** launched the “Regional Open Government Labs” initiative, which aimed to bring together local governments and CSOs to address issues at the municipal level. The initiative piloted 13 regional labs, which connected over 100 municipalities and CSOs in a network to support the design and implementation of open government initiatives. The labs have implemented 24 projects covering various policy areas, such as health, rural development, and closing the digital gap for older adults. The federal government financed the initiatives, which were submitted via an application by the local representatives collaborating in each Lab. The federal government also supported peer learning exchanges among local governments involved in the initiative to share lessons learned through the co-creation and implementation process.

Estonia's [third action plan](#) (2016–2018) coincided with a large-scale territorial reform to reduce the number of local municipalities in the country. This reform created an opportunity to address previous gaps in access to information and citizen engagement at the local level. During the third action plan, the e-Government Academy [carried out](#) test projects to implement open government principles in two pilot municipalities, Elva and Lääneranna. Elva [implemented](#) its open government action plan, while Lääneranna [promoted](#) youth participation in the municipal budget. After the pilot's success, these efforts were expanded to more municipalities. In the [fourth action plan](#) (2018–2020), Valga [completed](#) its open government action plan, and in the [fifth action plan](#) (2020–2022), the Ministry of Finance and the e-Governance Academy organized open government [workshops](#) with half of

Supporting the scaling of local open government beyond OGP action plans

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Estonia's municipalities represented. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior launched a capacity-building program to improve municipalities' community engagement skills. These efforts helped embed a culture of open government at the local level. For example, the number of municipalities practicing participatory budgeting rose from 18 in 2018 to 51 in 2022. The number of municipalities that implemented an open government action plan or strategic agenda rose from six to 22 over the same period.

Nigeria [replicated](#) the OGP process at the state level, which led to over 60 percent of states co-creating their open government commitments by 2022. To participate, the states had to commit to the OGP principles and send a letter expressing their intent to join the OGP process through to the OGP Nigeria National Secretariat. Once they joined, states had to co-create commitments with their local stakeholders. States could request assistance from the National Secretariat to develop and implement the action plans, which will be evaluated by the National Secretariat every six months. The OGP National Secretariat has worked in close collaboration with civil society and funders to encourage states to participate in the program, allocate budgets, and implement the action plans. Efforts are underway to work with Nigerian Governors Forum and National Economic Council to expand the program to include the remaining states.

Similarly, in 2018, **Tunisia** adopted a commitment to [implement](#) OGP at the local level in ten municipalities. Using a similar participatory approach as the OGP model at the national level, municipalities developed commitments in line with their priorities and created opportunities for citizens to help define commitments and monitor implementation. Tunisia's OGP national multi-stakeholder forum appointed a municipal committee from its members, composed of an equal number of CSOs and government representatives. This committee devised the 10 criteria to select municipalities to participate through a competitive process. Seventy-two local administrations received training on open government and the OGP co-creation process. In the end, eight municipalities submitted OGP local action plans drafted with local civil society and the support of the national government. These were adopted by the municipal councils. Tunisia's fifth action plan includes a commitment to select and support 10 additional municipalities to develop open government action plans, as part of what is now an [ongoing effort](#) to entrench OGP principles at the local level, reflected in multiple commitments across action plan cycles.

Supporting the scaling of local open government beyond OGP action plans

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In **Mexico**, beginning in 2015, the National Institute of Transparency, Access to Public Information, and Data Protection (INAI, in Spanish) launched “Cocreación desde lo Local,” an initiative that replicated the OGP model of that time at the state level. According to the [platform](#), over 235 public institutions, 30 access to information oversight bodies, and 218 civil society organizations have participated so far. Any state can participate in the initiative if it endorses an Open Gov Declaration and an official document to create a Local Technical Secretariat (a multi-stakeholder forum led by government and civil society) and co-creates an action plan. This initiative aims to create permanent spaces for dialogue to find collaborative solutions for critical problems. INAI’s role is to provide guidance on co-creating an action plan and establishing the Local Technical Secretariat that leads the process. Local access to information oversight bodies, in coordination with INAI, are responsible for monitoring. States are encouraged to publish progress on implementation and report back to INAI. OGP members can replicate this model by adapting INAI’s materials (available in Spanish and English), such as a [virtual training course](#) for municipal government officials, [recommendations](#) to incorporate a gender perspective in local open government projects, a [manual](#) providing options for open government practices, and a [self-diagnostic tool](#) for municipal governments.

The government of **Morocco** launched a program in 2022 to institutionalize open government approaches in all local governments, as a collaborative effort between the Directorate General of Territorial Collectivities (DGCT) in the Ministry of the Interior, the Association of Moroccan Regions, and Impact for Development, a CSO. Called the PACTO program (Support Program to Open Local Government, in English), this initiative aims to create a network for local government officials, CSOs, and members of the public to collaborate on the creation, implementation, and monitoring of open government projects. As of December 1, 2023, 66 local governments, representing 12 regions, four provinces, and 50 municipalities, have joined the network. These local governments have submitted 52 local open government action plans covering at least 30 policy areas. To date, 46 elected local councils have officially adopted these action plans. The national government has supported these locally led projects by hosting training workshops (both online and in person) for local government officials and CSOs, mobilizing experts to attend local co-creation workshops to support the process, and developing tools to improve the capacity of participants to carry out co-creation, implementation, and evaluation. Local governments in the PACTO program have hosted over 100 co-creation workshops to date, with over 2,700 participants attending these events. PACTO has also already seen progress in institutionalizing this new model for engagement by naming a

Supporting the scaling of local open government beyond OGP action plans

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point of contact in each participating local jurisdiction. Morocco is working on further expanding this program under their [2024–2027](#) national action plan.

Some of these initiatives have originated as commitments within OGP national action plans, while others trace their origins outside the OGP process or plans. The choice of including commitments within OGP national action plans, or launching initiatives that go beyond the action plans but take advantage of the OGP process or ecosystem, is influenced by many factors, including available capacities, resources, intra-governmental dynamics, and coordination mechanisms. Regardless of whether a commitment or initiative is part of an action plan, the national government will want to ensure that there are feedback systems to improve the design and implementation of local-level commitments. Successful cases of national initiatives that have sought to promote the co-creation of commitments or action plans in local jurisdictions have included strong awareness raising, capacity building, and technical support led by the national governments on both open government policies and co-creation methods.

Section 6.4 of the [OGP Handbook](#) provides recommendations on the types of commitments that are best suited to be included in national action plans, such that plans both remain strategic and manageable in their implementation and assessment.

For governments thinking of initiatives to partner with local jurisdictions to promote open government, consider the design choices available along with their characteristics.

Design Choice	Factors to Consider
<p>Inclusion in the OGP action plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrally coordinated multi-stakeholder process • Assessment by the IRM, following set methodology for action plan assessments • Standard set of rules across all members • Standardized reporting obligations to meet OGP requirements
<p>Outside of the OGP action plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexibility in terms of timelines, political cycles, and evaluation • No IRM assessment, but independent assessments could be commissioned domestically, or a self-assessment and reporting approach may be adopted • Adaptable to different local contexts and needs

Institutional Arrangements

The institutional arrangements for promoting national-local collaboration vary across countries. In countries such as **Ecuador, Spain**, the **Philippines, Ukraine**, and others, associations of regional or local governments have a seat in the national OGP multi-stakeholder forum, alongside relevant ministries at the national level that are responsible for coordination with local government and civil society working across levels of government. By contrast, in countries such as **Armenia, Indonesia**, and others, the national government coordinates with local governments leading on commitment implementation through communication and coordination channels set up for all implementing agencies within an action plan. **Colombia, Italy, Kenya**, and **Uruguay** are among examples of countries where one or more local governments are directly represented at the national OGP multi-stakeholder forum. In other cases, such as **Morocco** and **Mexico**, a lead ministry or an autonomous body establishes separate mechanisms outside the OGP process to coordinate processes and programs. Finally, countries like **Canada** have established permanent or temporary spaces for collaboration to define approaches, methods, and/or standards for specific policy areas that can be applied across jurisdictions and agencies.

Finally, it is important to note that not all practices are government-led. A majority of the aforementioned initiatives are centered around strong government and civil society collaboration at national and local levels, with several efforts that are led by civil society. For example, in the **United Kingdom**, the UK Open Government Network, a coalition of active citizens and CSOs committed to open government, coordinates with the national government and devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to promote policy coherence and in the development of their [respective national action plans](#).

Useful Resources

Some helpful OGP resources for national and local governments working together are listed below. While these resources may contain formal requirements or recommendations for OGP members, these can be adapted for use, as needed by anyone working on multi-level open government initiatives.

- [Participation and Co-creation Standards](#)
- [IRM in a Box: A Toolkit for OGP Local Monitoring Bodies](#)
- OGP Local [Handbook](#) and [Playbook](#)
- The [Open Gov Guide](#), the “how-to” resource on applying open government principles to real-world challenges