



Australia's Open Government Forum

Background

Commitment 5.1 of Australia's first Open Government National Action Plan commits Australia to establishing a multistakeholder forum.

A 12-week process to establish a forum commenced on 17 April:



A phase of public engagement included:

- publication, on 1 May, of a proposal by the Interim Working Group on how the forum might work. Four submissions were received, responding to 10 targeted questions posed in the proposal.
- a Twitter Q&A with the Interim Working Group Co-Chairs on 4 May, which resulted in nearly 500 engagements (retweets and likes) and nearly 21,000 impressions.
- a public workshop in Melbourne on 17 May, attended by 29 participants. About 200 viewers viewed the opening and closing of the workshop, which was livestreamed.

The Interim Working Group met on 18 May and considered the results of the consultations. It made the recommendations below to government relating to the establishment of Australia's first multistakeholder forum, which it proposed should be called the Open Government Forum.

Government has now accepted the recommendations and commenced a process to establish the Forum by the end of June 2017.

Purpose

The Open Government Forum should:

- monitor and drive implementation of the current Open Government National Action Plan
- help develop the next Open Government National Action Plan, and
- raise awareness about open government.

Specifically, it should:

- seek to make government and other relevant institutions work more effectively and efficiently for people through enhanced transparency, policy development, service delivery and decision-making
- oversee implementation of Australia's Open Government Commitments, including monitoring, advising, assessing, reporting to the government and community on progress, and overseeing broad community engagement
- develop recommendations on future Commitments, informed by public consultation and including consideration of potential Commitments identified in earlier consultation processes, based on:
 - consistency and level of priority against the OGP principles and grand challenges, as outlined in the OGP Articles of Governance
 - the desirability of specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and time-bound Commitments
 - the level of ambition and transformational impact of proposed Commitments
 - the feasibility and the likelihood of implementation success
 - the costs and benefits of the proposed Commitments, including alternatives to achieve a similar outcome, and
 - the views expressed by the community and the Australian Government.
- facilitate broad community engagement on prospective Commitments and raise awareness about open government generally, and
- consider submitting a letter of commendation to the Open Government Partnership to accompany each National Action Plan.

Structure

The Forum should:

- comprise not more than 16 members, with equal representation from government (including Australian and State and Territory Governments) and civil society, and
- be co-chaired by a member each from its government and civil society membership.

Ways of Working

The Forum should:

- meet at least every two months unless otherwise agreed, including in different capital cities
- conduct its work, as required and / or convenient, by electronic means. The Forum should seek a high level of community engagement by electronic means, including by disseminating its meeting agendas, minutes and working documents online, live-streaming important proceedings, and trialling other methods of engagement
- seek to develop and engage communities of interest relating to existing or probable future Australian Open Government commitments
- receive regular updates on implementation of Australia's Open Government Commitments, and be able to make requests for relevant information, including the possibility of discussing particular commitments through 'deep dives' or similar means
- be supported by the Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet through:
 - preparation of draft agendas, working documents and minutes
 - organisation of logistics for Forum meetings, and
 - publishing of the agenda and minutes of Forum meetings online.
- reimburse its civil society members for reasonable travel costs
- regularly review its own ways of working
- convene an inaugural meeting that also includes members of the Interim Working Group, to hand over.

Appointment

Civil society members of the Multistakeholder Forum should be appointed as individuals, with regard to:

- their demonstrated support of OGP's vision and the Open Government Declaration
- their expertise relevant to the Open Government Partnership, including existing or probable future Australian Open Government commitments
- their ability to engage broad and diverse community networks
- their previous experience working with and influencing government
- the desirability of maintaining some continuity between successive Forums, balanced with the desirability of reaching new communities and reflecting emerging open government priorities

Candidates for initial appointment should be assessed by a selection panel comprising Co-Chairs of the Interim Working Group (who will continue as Co-Chairs of the Multistakeholder Forum) and an additional eminent person as agreed by the Co-Chairs. The panel will then make unanimous recommendations to government on the Forum's civil society membership.

Nominees should be required to provide a short cover letter outlining their motivations for joining and addressing the selection criteria, which should be published.

Given the Civil society members should be appointed until appointment of the next Forum under the next Open Government National Action Plan. Any mid-term vacancies should be filled on the recommendation of the Co-Chairs of the Forum.

Civil society members should only be eligible for reappointment for a single additional term.

The Australian Government should appoint Government members of the Forum.

The Forum should seek to broadly reflect the diversity of the Australian community. In particular, consistent with the Australian Government's target, women and men should hold at least 40 per cent of positions on the Forum. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and young people, should be particularly encouraged to apply.