

Application

Preliminary Question

In which language are you submitting the application (check one)?

Please note that each country has the option of either submitting an application in English, or in their native language if they are unable to pay for translation into English. For applications submitted in the native language, OGP will pay for the translation into English before passing on to the judges.

English

Native language (please mention)

If you are submitting in your native language and it is non-Latin based language, you will have the option of uploading a PDF file at the end of this application. Please follow the questions and word limits mentioned in the application template.

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 of the 2015 Open Government Awards. If the initiative is operating under one or more alternate name(s), provide the name that is most commonly recognized.

e-Residency programme

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.

[100 words]

Nomination of Estonian e-Residency programme was suggested by the Government Office of Estonia, in consultation with civil society and governmental partners in the format of Coordinating Body for national OGP Action Plan.

The arguments for choosing this initiative were: it is one of the flagship initiatives in national OGP action plan 2014-2016; it has had a larger impact on OGP goals than alternative candidate initiatives; it is also innovative in global context.

Is this initiative included in your country's OGP National Action Plan?

(Applicants can choose initiatives from within OR outside their OGP National Action Plans)

Yes No

GOVERNMENT POINT OF CONTACT (required)

Provide the name, title, phone number(s), email address(es) and mailing address of a single point of contact for the purposes of communicating with your team. The person should be the senior most individual responsible for overseeing the application requirements.

Please also provide the name and professional title of the government official responsible for implementing the initiative, if different from above.

Mr Siim Sikkut, Digital Policy Adviser to Government / Prime Minister, Government Office of the Republic of Estonia. E-mail: siim.sikkut@rigikantselei.ee. Phone: +37257450107. Mailing address: Government Office, Stenbock House, Rahukohtu str 1, Tallinn 15161, Estonia.

Leader of the initiative: Mr Taavi Kotka, Government CIO, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications of the Republic of Estonia.

TYPE OF APPLICATION (required)

We strongly encourage applicants to submit a joint application from a government agency and a civil society organization. Only submit a joint application if a civil society organization was involved in either designing, implementing or monitoring the initiative jointly with the government.

Is this a joint application?

Yes No

If yes, please fill out the "civil society point of contact" field below.

CIVIL SOCIETY POINT OF CONTACT

Please provide the name and title of a single point of contact at the organization. By providing these details you acknowledge that you are jointly applying with a civil society organization for the 2015 Open Government Awards.

OTHER PARTNERSHIPS (optional)

If you are partnering with one or more other government agencies, private sector entities, media etc., please list each partner. In 250 words or less, provide a brief narrative of the partnership and the role each partner plays in your initiative.

e-Residency was designed and has been possible in the first place as a wider collaboration initiative. Its initial concept was created by consortium of Ministry of Interior (in charge of identity policy and the issuing of identity documents); Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications (in charge of digital services and infrastructure in Estonia) and Government Office (strategic coordination of key initiatives across government).

The initiative is governed by an interagency Council consisting of the representatives of aforementioned three founding institutions, joined by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in charge of issuing of e-Residency abroad), Ministry of Justice (necessary legal framework and business-oriented digital services), Ministry of Finance (related taxing and state budget matters), Enterprise Estonia (national business support agency, hosting the programme team). All these institutions, their officials and subsidiary agencies daily participate in further design and delivery of e-Residency programme, including the digital services available to e-Residents.

In addition, starting from the initial development phase, key private sector stakeholders have been involved in designing the programme (e.g. associations of IT companies, financial service providers, etc). Regular outreach and co-creation activities continue to involve further non-governmental stakeholders in the development of service offering to e-Residents, in order to evolve e-Residency into a platform and ecosystem of digital service innovation in both public and private sector.

B. THE INITIATIVE

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is prepared to celebrate a range of successful applicants for the Open Government Awards. This year's theme is Improving Public Services through Open Government. Please visit here for more clarification on the theme. To qualify for recognition, we need to understand the various elements of success of your initiative and its sustainability over time. Please answer the following questions:

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 what were the challenges posed by your national (or local) economic or political context?

In Estonia, we have offered public services and means of communication with public authorities online for 10+ years. Most of the services and interaction (e.g. applications and correspondence) are available easy-to-use digitally with state-issued digital identity (ID-card or mobile-ID), which enables online authentication and legally valid digital signing. So far, only physical residents could get it.

Foreign investors and entrepreneurs, foreign staff, etc. who did not want to become actual residents had to rely on paper-based, i.e. slower and less accessible transactions in our otherwise digital country. Same time, government and private entities had to keep up parallel, paper-based processes, making the service delivery costlier.

e-Residency solves this problem by making public services and private transactions (e.g. signing of contracts) digital and more accessible to 45,000 foreigners who already have business or other relations in Estonia. Namely, the essence of e-Residency is to offer Estonian digital identity to anyone in the world, opening up the services more broadly.

Same time, e-Residency allows to grow the economy (market size) in digital sense by inviting new customers to digital services – in the context of Estonia's otherwise shrinking population. This allows to make Estonia more attractive for new investors, innovators, business partners.

INITIATIVE DESIGN (required)

In 250 words or less, describe your initiative's goals and objectives. How did it aim to improve public service delivery, who was it intended to benefit (specify the target population), and why was it important to use open government approaches to achieve this goal? If your initiative was designed to improve access or services for disadvantaged or marginalized groups, provide details on this here. Describe any innovations in the design of the initiative.

The aims of the programme have been to:

Make Estonia's digital public services as well as useful private services available to non-residents who have some relation (e.g. business) in Estonia – there-by making interaction with public authorities and services more widely accessible and easier. In other words, the aim has been exactly to improve public service delivery.

Make Estonia's market and economy bigger by attracting new users for the digital services – bringing new business to existing companies and services, stimulating innovation for new ones.

Attracting new businesses to locate to Estonia, by attracting e-Residents to open up new companies.

The official targets of the programme, as adopted by Government of Estonia in December 2014, were to attract first 2,000 e-Residents in 2015 and 17,000 by end of 2017.

However, the initiative was launched under the unofficial target "10 million e-Estonians by 2025". It was done to spark thinking on how to make e-Residency really big – what could be the useful services to reach the e-Resident community 10 times the Estonian population?

e-Residency itself was designed in open governance fashion. One core aim of the programme is to set-up constant services users' feedback mechanisms to keep improving the offering, iterate and innovate existing and new services, etc. The team constantly engages in feedback-asking and co-creation with target group, plus external stakeholders. We have publicly announced that the programme is officially in public beta phase – initial version, to be developed with and by users themselves.

INITIATIVE OUTCOMES (required)

In 450 words or less, explain how your initiative was able to demonstrate one or more of the following results:

Citizens have better access to information on the public services to which they are entitled, and/or information on the performance of public service providers

Governments are better at asking for and responding to feedback or complaints by citizens on the quality of public services

Citizens have ways to actively participate in the design and delivery of public services

Citizens have mechanisms to monitor and oversee public works and services

Initiatives should also provide evidence if the initiative was able to expand access to public services to a larger population than before or if the quality and efficiency of public services has improved.

If there are any baseline indicators to measure the outcomes of the initiative, please describe them in detail. If the initiative was included in the OGP Action Plan, please describe how this did (or did not) contribute to the initiative's success.

Since the launch of e-Residency in December 2014, the first six months have showed that e-Residency is indeed promising. Some facts:

By end of May, 3,000 people (more than the initial 2015 annual target!) had applied to become e-Resident. This may not sound much, but until May you had to come to Estonia twice to get it. Now you can apply online and pick up the card in our foreign representations (embassies and consulates) in 34 countries globally.

Applicants come from more than 90 countries. The neighboring countries dominate among them: Finland, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania. This reflects the initial target group of non-residents already with relation to Estonia: mostly such people come from nearby. It also reflects that initially you could apply only physically in Estonia, which was a barrier. Since online applications and issuing in our foreign representations were launched, the geography is expanding fast.

More than 18,000 people are as potential e-Residents in mailing list.

The team is involved in heavy feedback and user experience communication with current and potential e-Residents. The findings are fed into service improvements right away, making both the application processes as well as the public and private services available to e-Residents more user-friendly, informative, etc. The outcome has been, as manifested by ample user feedback, that now Estonian digital services and public information is much more accessible to non-residents who don't speak the native language.

In initial stages, the target group for e-Residency has been everybody in the world interested in running a location independent international business online: whether administering the already-existing cross-border business or starting new ones (e.g. entering the EU market from third countries). To that end, the initial work has led to the following services being open to e-Residents:

Establish and administer a company online

Conduct all the banking online, e.g. make transfers

Declare taxes online

Digitally sign contracts and any other documents (e.g. annual reports) within the company or with external partners

Access to international payment service providers

We work with the private sector and government agencies to add new services and improve the current ones, based on feedback and business development opportunities. For example, right now it still takes one face-to-face meeting to open a bank account or the help of virtual office providers to establish a company with a legal Estonian address. Work is underway to make these services more user-friendly soon.

One indirect big benefit of e-Residency is that the betterment of services and public information make them more accessible (simple, easier-to-use, etc) for all residents and citizens in Estonia as well. For example, easier company registration developed with e-Residents in mind will benefit every new entrepreneur.

INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY (required)

In 200 words or less, please describe any plans for scaling up or sustaining the initiative. Base your description of the strategy on the 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 manage those risks on a regular basis.

We are constantly improving the e-Residency offering: the application procedures and most importantly the services available. This is to the safeguard continued interest for becoming e-Resident and satisfaction of users.

Our government has been nimble to scale the initiative faster than initially planned. For example, we were to open up the issuing in our foreign representations by end of 2015, but brought it forward to May 2015 to catch the momentum.

The operational challenge is indeed to be agile enough in government setting, e.g. to secure the resources for scaling the initiative quickly based on changing user needs and application numbers. For example, if applications rise fast, we also need to increase the handling capacity fast. We deal with this risk by engaging top-level government regularly, e.g. by periodic progress reports and resource request discussion at Cabinet level.

Another risk can be collaboration, especially as working in speedy manner brings stress and changes are needed from stakeholders (e.g. service improvements). We deal with it by paying strong attention to relations management, incl. having all key governmental stakeholders onboard in key steering decisions.

We also pay attention to media relations, to ensure continued general support from partners, decision-makers and general public.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS (required)

While it is strongly encouraged that each initiative includes an implementing partner, such as a Civil Society Organization, private sector agency, media entity, etc., it is not a requirement. However, you are required to secure and upload documents from at least two credible nongovernmental actors, who can attest to the veracity of the 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.

NGO supporting letters.zip

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.

Republic of Estonia is the world's first country to offer e-Residency – a secure state-issued digital identity, which makes the public and private services conveniently and efficiently accessible to non-residents. In global times, improving service delivery and information for non-natives should become part of better governance. Governments are best not to serve just the residents, but any stakeholders.

Estonia's e-Residency also constitutes a new model of open government and public service innovation. We are developing e-Residency like a governmental start-up. We launched it fast and agile, are iterating on-the-go (calling the current stage public beta in tech world fashion), constantly working to improve and extend the offering hand-in-hand with users. Start-up way is a different-than-usual mind-set: one of full user orientation, flexible and open development, commitment to delivery.

Finally, e-Residency brings crude benefits of better services and access to information to non-residents of today and tomorrow and also our own people. With e-Residency, an otherwise tiny country can become large, even if in digital domain only. The vision is to form from e-Residency a global community of e-Estonians: fans, friends and supporters around the world, happy to contribute to our country's development. Such a digital expansion has never been tried and would take open government notion to another level – creating a country without borders.

Finally, e-Residency online application was selected Best e-Service of 2015 in Estonia – what's better proof of its merits than being best in the country of many great digital innovations (nicknamed e-Estonia for a reason)!

VIDEO SUBMISSION or ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS (optional*)

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:

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? Keep your description and language simple.

* 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. You may upload additional documents instead, such as proof of implementation and results if you wish. This could take the form of evaluation or audit reports, citizen surveys, media reports etc. that would provide additional validation for judges. We hope that this option offers a new and inventive way in which you can best express the results of your work.

You are only allowed to upload one file with a maximum of 3 pages. This file must be in English or in your native language. 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.

Full Submission Of non-Latin Based Native Language

If your language is Latin based, DO NOT use this upload field. Please use the application above.

You are only allowed to upload one file with an extension of .PDF