

# 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.

Argu

### 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]

The selection started with an open call on the website [www.open-overheid.nl](http://www.open-overheid.nl), where people could sign up with their initiative. We planned that the second phase would be a jury that would select a top 3 of the best initiatives out of the applications. Then the civil society could vote for the best initiative on the website. Because there was a lack of applications, we decided to skip the jury, extend the registration period and to put the initiatives direct on the website for voting. The initiative with most votes: Argu, has become the Dutch nomination.

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.

Bram Serree: Programme manager organizational innovation, Government of Utrecht, 0031643725992, bram.serree@utrecht.nl

Koos Steenbergen: Policy officer democratic innovation, Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, 0031611104880, koos.steenbergen@minbzk.nl

### 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.

Joep Meinderstma: CEO Argu, 0031636020942, joep@argu.co

### 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.

Argu is an initiative that was supported in its development by business incubator 'UtrechtInc'. UtrechtInc accelerates the growth of early stage (IT) start-ups during their first years of existence. UtrechtInc exclusively supports start-ups that have social goals aimed at health, climate or education through the provision of advice, financial resources and networks. The programme was started by the University of Utrecht and is funded by inter alia the local government of Utrecht, the Province of Utrecht and the Rabobank. Argu successfully accomplished the 'pressure cooker' stage within the UtrechtInc programme has therefore received funding from the Rabobank Pre-Seed fund.

Contact at UtrechtInc: Roel Raatgever, Managing Director UtrechtInc, 0031624674383, roel@utrechtinc.nl

Argu now works with the local government of Utrecht to decide which policy issues are most suited to share on the platform (<https://argu.co/utrecht>). Additionally, Argu cooperates with various local and national political parties to give them a special account on the platform. This enables said parties to respond directly to citizen initiatives.

They also participate in the 'Democratic Challenge' programme of the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations. This programme helps innovative democratic initiatives.

## 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?

Millions of citizens have great ideas and valuable insights. The internet provides us with a way to gather all this information and use it to improve policy. However, the internet and social media platforms have yet to succeed in facilitating informed and substantive online discussions. Most online discussions are shown as long lists of comments, which lack structure and depth. To make things even worse: similar thinking minds with similar opinions tend to cluster on the internet, which impedes critical thinking and nuanced debate.

We live in one of the most democratic countries in the world, but for many Dutch citizens it doesn't feel like that. Just 33% of the Dutch say they trust political parties and fewer than 3% are members of these parties. However, people want to contribute and think about how we can solve the problems in our society. Politics is too concerned with marketing and too little with informed, nuanced debate.

We need to narrow the gap between government, politics and citizens. We need a modern platform to bring all these actors together and make them cooperate to find the best solutions for the problems that our society faces.

### 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 audit reports for disadvantaged or marginalized groups, provide details on this here. Describe any innovations in the design of the initiative.

Argu is an online platform that structures discussions in an innovative, solution-focused and organized way. It starts by identifying a problem that needs a solution: a question. After posting the question, users can share their ideas. Users can vote on ideas and place arguments either in favour or against them. The most important pros and cons are voted to the top, which gives users an easy way to see the most relevant aspects of any discussion.

With Argu a local or national government can have its own discussion forum with which it can facilitate informed debate on policy matters. This forum can be used in three ways:

Citizens can easily share their own ideas, support and collect signatures and discuss these ideas in a structured manner. The (local) government can easily see what ideas people have, how many people are for or against it and which arguments drive the opinions of people.

The government shares its own policy ideas on Argu. Residents can respond to these plans in a constructive manner.

The government shares an open question: *how do we solve problem X* – after which anyone can share their ideas.

Political parties can share their opinion on these ideas and directly reply to the concerns and ideas of citizens. Finally, the government who manages the forum can decide whether to send an update to anyone who has interacted with the online discussion, so everyone's up-to-date about the decisions that are made.

### 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.

Involved citizens and better policy. With Argu politics, government and citizens become closer together, by facilitating substantive dialogue with modern digital means. By involving more people in decision making through a process where substantively, solution-oriented discussions are conducted, more ideas and insights can be collected and made effective. By confronting anyone with different views, ideas and the associated advantages and disadvantages, citizens, policy makers and politicians can make a well-informed opinion that will result in better decision making.

As the platform (<https://argu.co/utrecht>) is launched just weeks ago, the current results (in the form of, for example visitors) are not a good metric to help determine the project's success.

### 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.

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Argu intends to implement their technology in many local governments. They currently have three full-time workers and two interns to develop and distribute the platform. Argu is currently in conversation with various municipalities that are interested in using their technology. They are translating their platform to other languages as well.

The team is designing new features which make use of open data that is not yet available to the public. This data that Argu will use in the future includes data from the national and local parliaments. This data concerns agendas of topics, voting behaviour of elected officials and

A potential barrier to Argu is the degree to which local governments are really willing to be transparent and involve citizens. The platform not only incentivises governments to share their decisions in a new way, but also reply to ideas from citizens.

### 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.

OGP validation of claims.docx

## 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.

We live in one of the most democratic countries in the world, but for many Dutch citizens it doesn't feel like that. Just 33% of the Dutch say they trust political parties and fewer than 3% are members of these parties. However, people want to contribute and think about how we can solve the problems in our society.

We need to narrow the gap between government, politics and citizens. We need a modern platform to bring all these actors together and make them cooperate to find the best solutions for the problems that our society faces.

Argu is an online platform that structures discussions in an innovative, solution-focused and organized way. With Argu a local or national government can have its own discussion forum with which it can facilitate informed debate on policy matters. On argu citizens can easily share their own ideas, support and collect signatures and discuss these ideas in a structured manner. The (local) government can easily see what ideas people have, how many people are for or against it and which arguments drive the opinions of people.

The forum gives the government also the opportunity to share its own ideas on Argu or share an open question: *how do we solve problem X* – after which anyone can share their ideas. Political parties can share their opinion on these ideas and directly reply to the concerns and ideas of citizens.

Argu structures discussions, substantiates opinions and brings politicians, civilians and governments closer together.

### 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