

Submission

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.

Smart Municipality: Creation and installation of the Municipal Management Information System (MMIS) in the local governance offices in Armenia.

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]

In the spirit of open governance, the OGP team has crowdsourced the selection and nomination of the Armenian project to the wider public, as well as NGOs and Government.

A series of publications were posted on the OGP Platform (http://ogp.am/hy/news/item/2015/04/07/ogp_award/) and social networks to nudge the nomination of an innovative solution in public service delivery. Subsequent requests for ideas were circulated among government partners and NGOs. Following the submission of suggestions, the OGP team called for a special expanded meeting of the OGP Working Group, which scrutinized the submissions and shortlisted 2 ideas, among which the "Smart Municipality" project.

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.

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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.

Grisha Khachatryan, President, Information Systems Development and Training Center (ISTDC) NGO

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Email: isintellect@yahoo.com

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.

The initiative is a joint effort of private and public partners. It started as a response to municipal governance issues, raised by the Government and the development partners. The identified solution is a synergy of the private sector expertise and the social agenda of the government. The implementing team includes an ambitious consortium between the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations of Armenia (Ministry) and the Information Systems Development and Training Center (ISTDC) NGO, with an ongoing support from the Prime Minister's Office and Development Agencies.

The "Smart Municipality" platform was a trigger to the profound reform process, which helped to connect the incentives and needs of the citizenry to the institutional development of local government (LG) bodies. The idea, initially cultivated at the ISTDC NGO in 2006, was immediately supported not only by the Ministry but also a cohort of development partners and private organizations. The impressive list of partnerships goes beyond the hierarchic cooperation between the national, regional and municipal authorities and includes development partners from German GIZ Agency, Open Society Foundations – Armenia, World Vision, Eurasia Foundation and RTI International.

Each of the partners had a strategic investment in ensuring the success of the initiative, either by advocating for the concept on policy level or investing monetary support in creating Citizen Offices in the communities. The project eventually leads to a strategic devolution of power from the central to local level and ultimately to the end-user, strengthening participation and feedback capacity of the citizenry.

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?

The development of local governance and municipal management systems in Armenia has allowed the country to join the mainstream of European democratic institutions. However, the newly-set system of LG was imperfect; the LG operating in **915 communities (49 urban and 866 rural)** lacked capacities, resources and skills to provide efficient management, to deliver high-quality and need-based public services, as well as to ensure sufficiently transparent, participatory and accountable activities of their own. In the meantime, carrying the inertia of the centralized communist system, citizens had no effective tools to access those services, to oversee the work of the municipal authorities and not at all to influence their decisions.

Evolutionary efforts to achieve a leap forward did not yield sufficient results. There was a need to shake the system in order to achieve a **conceptual not a structural** decentralization. ISTDC has used human-centered approaches to **nudge** the perceptions and the needs of the end-users in the municipalities and to design a smart approach in **applying up-to-date information and communication technologies (ICT) to achieve transparency, trust and improved service provision on the municipal level**. The rapidly growing high technologies provide new horizons for drastically improving the services delivered to citizens.

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 initiative aims to boost the operational effectiveness of the local government in Armenia and to improve public service delivery through application of new technologies and social innovation approaches.

In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives have been identified:

To create opportunities for the citizens to participate in the community management processes via i) accessing the information on available services through user-friendly web interfaces and ii) influencing the quality and quantity of the services through enabled feedback mechanisms.

To enhance the capacities of the LG officers to improve the public services they deliver using innovative methods and tools, and to involve the citizens in the local self-government processes.

In pursuing the objectives the Consortium has initiated the following actions.

The Municipal Management Information System (MMIS) was created and introduced in communities of Armenia. The MMIS has been installed in over 550 communities (61%) across the country. It is being constantly updated and improved, supplemented by new components and operational capacities.

Citizen Offices were established in 11 urban communities aiming to improve the services provided to the citizens.

A variety of management functions is enabled through the Smart Municipality system. The internet/intranet enabled system provides options of online service provision, tax and fee calculation, budget monitoring, problem reporting. The system also grants access to information on municipal events, available services and employment opportunities. Users of the system can participate in discussions on community-related issues, programme planning and implementation, register their comments, submit applications and receive responses.

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.

The New Concept: The web-based Smart Municipality system was created for the local self-government bodies. This is a unified information system consisting of numerous management systems, registers, information resources, internal and external communication tools, e-governance, e-participation and e-services components. The system is integrated with other information systems to provide the necessary online information flow and data updating.

Coverage: The system enables the LG to carry out their functions and deliver various services applying the principles of open governance. Smart Municipality was introduced and launched in over 550 communities in all 10 regions (provinces) of Armenia, involving approximately 92% of the population of the regions.

Ease of access: Most services delivered through the Smart Municipality can be provided online. However we have provided an additional access gate for the same services to the net-marginalized groups through offline interfaces too. Offline Citizen Offices have been established in 11 urban communities, to provide an additional offline access for the net-marginalized groups. The Offices deliver various services to the citizens; the number of provided services varies from 16 to 27, depending on the size of the community. Additionally easy-step-guide manuals are distributed to the new users through the system.

User Path: A citizens can post any problems he/she faces in their communities and highlight them in front of the local authorities. All recorded problems are received and managed through the Smart Municipality system. If a citizen is applying for the services, he/she can track the delivery of the services online, and consult the online guides/specialists. The user is also authorized to evaluate the quality of the delivered services.

The time for providing certain types of services has been reduced by up to three times with the recent update of the system. For instance, the provision of construction permit used to take 10-15 days while currently this service is provided within 3-7 days. Services related to provision of various certificates, as well as municipal property, local taxes, duties and fees have noticeably improved. The paperwork and time spent for a service unit have been considerably cut, unnecessary delay and lines have disappeared.

Capacity Building: 3233 municipal servants have been trained to effectively operate the Smart Municipality system and to deliver quality services to the citizens.

Accountability: Due to the Smart Municipality system, the community development plans have become transparent from the designing stage to the actual management of the municipal projects to evaluation of the outputs and outcomes. The availability of electronic participatory tools enables the citizens to submit their proposals online, take part in decision-making on prioritizing the plans, oversee the process of plan implementation, present problems emerging during the plan implementation, take part in discussions, monitoring processes, etc.

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.

The **consortium power** of the partners supporting the Smart Municipality project is the key to its success and sustainability. The strategic Public Sector Modernization Project, initiated by the Government of Armenia initially envisaged installation and operation of the Smart Municipality system in 217 communities. Currently the system is already installed in over 550 communities. Starting from 2008, more than 3000 municipal servants participated in Smart Municipality training courses and parallel to the updates of the system, the consortium continues providing the trainings.

Such a cooperative effort has brought the smart municipal management processes to the point of no-return. The leap forward is further supported by Armenia's engagement in the **Open Government Partnership** initiative, which aims at achieving efficient, accountable and transparent governance in the country. As part of the initiative, the Government of Armenia pursues the policy to ensure sustainability of the Smart Municipality initiative by **mainstreaming** the system into the local governance ecosystem.

As for its **financial sustainability**, the program has reached a point, where the municipalities allocate funding in their annual budgets to ensure the smooth maintenance of the system, to update the ICT equipment, to enlarge the user networks and to regularly train the staff.

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.

References.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.

Local government offices are the closest gate for a citizen to the public administration. A considerable part of the public services is delivered to the citizens by the LG offices. The efficiency, quality and accessibility of the provided services largely depend on the degree of development of the local government' capacities, as well as the availability of favorable conditions for the citizens to access these services.

We have designed a system which addresses the complexity of the situation and sets an ambitious vision for the generation-next. We have unlocked the citizen – the end user of public services – from the position of being a authority, tools and frameworks to co-design the municipal services, to track the implementation of those services and to fully engage in the process of community management.

The **Smart Municipality** initiative, put forward by our NGO, has managed to attract a solid consortium of Government and Development partners. We have created an ICT-based municipal management information system, which positions the citizen in the core of the power relations. We have trained more than 3200 municipal servants across the country on the use of the system. More than 3300 computers are installed in the municipalities, connected to LAN and internet.

The MMIS system was further mainstreamed into the local governance ecosystem of the country, by being included in Armenia's Action Plan through its Open Government Partnership initiative.

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