

UK Multi-Stakeholder Forum

Read-out for publication

Wednesday 18th January 2023

Aim of the meeting

The aim of this Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF) was to discuss lessons learnt from the past to shape future planning, and to discuss plans for future MSFs and the co-creation process for the Sixth National Action Plan on Open Government (NAP6). This included the role of the MSF itself, the role of civil society in the MSF, and how we might best link the NAP6 co-creation process with wider civil society engagement on Open Government.

Due to the [Pre-MSF](#) having taken place just before the Christmas break, a verbal update on progress for the current Fifth National Action Plan on Open Government (NAP5) was not given, but a written update will be collated and shared after the MSF.

Attendees

There were a total of 30 attendees, of which 19 were government representatives and 11 from civil society. There were a further 3 apologies received, 2 governmental and 1 civil society.

Slide-deck

A comprehensive slide-deck was used to facilitate this meeting, which contains a substantial amount of information which will not be duplicated in the read-out. The slide-deck is available in PDF format.

Welcome

The meeting was co-chaired by Sue Bateman, Interim Chief Data Officer from CDDO, and Kevin Keith, Chair of the UK Open Government Network. A new member of the team has joined CDDO: Dr. Ben Gittins, Open Data and Transparency Advisor.

Paul Braithwaite from the OGP Support Unit provided an update on the OGP strategy development and the forthcoming UK Co-creation Brief from OGP, due in March 2023. You can find out more about OGP's strategy development at [Creating OGPs Future Together: Draft Strategy](#), and provide feedback on the draft strategy up until 15th February 2023.

Part One: Oversight

Actions resulting from Pre-MSF meeting

A number of actions relating to NAP5 were agreed at the Pre-MSF meeting, and all of these are currently in progress:

- Reconvene Open Contracting steering group: an initial meeting to shape the agenda for UK Open Contracting Steering Group took place before Christmas. Further steps are in-progress.
- Follow-up meeting of the Open Justice steering group: CDDO liaising with MoJ regarding approach and civil service resourcing, and how best to connect wider civil society engagement to the NAP process. Further plans to follow.
- Review approach to civil society engagement for Algorithmic Transparency (AT): CDDO has had internal discussion on AT civil society engagement and considering next steps.
- Improve communication of health transparency work to civil society bodies: Meeting arranged between government representatives and Mor Rubenstein to discuss this issue.
- Start working group on diversity and inclusion: a meeting between the Chair of UK OGN, CDDO and Cabinet Office HR is being arranged.
- Complete formation of FOI user rights group: Meeting due soon with Campaign for FOI to discuss working group and next steps.
- Convene working group of local transparency partners: Chair of UK OGN and CDDO are liaising with DLUHC and LGA, and a meeting is pending.
- A suitable co-creation process is required for Public Standards: a discussion between CDDO and the Cabinet Office Propriety and Ethics Team has begun, with follow-up actions planned.

The Multi-Stakeholder Forum

The presentation reviewed the role of the MSF, its current composition, and responsibilities for planning, engagement, communication and oversight of the National Action Plan on Open Government co-creation and implementation process. The need for balance between government and civil society representation, inclusivity in its operation, and diversity amongst its membership were all highlighted. These were seen as key to stabilising the MSF and ensuring a robust process capable of engaging with the government of the day.

The discussion centred around the guiding principles of good practice, and particularly parts of the MSF that worked well during the NAP5 process, with constructive relations between officials and civil society representatives being a highlight. The need to involve and induct more people into the Open Government process was highlighted, including on the government side so they could better understand their partners in civil society. This might be achieved through planned government introductory training on Open Government, raising broader awareness, developing government training resources and enabling introductions by civil society representatives. The need for regular updates on current NAP progress was highlighted, and a commitment made that these would be forthcoming on a quarterly basis.

Regarding the co-creation process, the importance of sharing early drafts with civil society, where possible, was highlighted to improve communication and avoid surprises when final information is released.

Part Two: Strategy and Planning

Civil society in the MSF

A summary of some of the challenges that civil society faces in engaging with government was presented, including fundamental questions about diversity and inclusion, capability to engage with government across a breadth of areas, capacity to facilitate outreach with limited resources, and how a 'network-of-networks' approach has the potential to start to address some of these issues. Developing new or harnessing existing thematic policy communities where government and civil society already interact, and linking these to the MSF and NAP6 co-creation process, was seen as a key part of evolving our ways of working.

Discussion included ideas around connecting efforts on Open Government across multiple levels of governance, and the different approaches to this between civil society and governments. At the OGP Europe event in Rome, there was powerful testimony from Ukraine on civil society and government collaboration under conflict conditions. The potential to engage with the [Convention of Scottish Local Authorities](#) (COSLA), the [Local Government Association](#) in England (LGA, including regional branches), [Northern Ireland Local Government Association](#) (NILGA) and [Welsh Local Government Association](#) (WLGA). The scope for engaging with Crown Dependencies and the Republic of Ireland (who are on the same NAP cycle as the UK) through the [British-Irish Council](#) was also suggested.

Co-creation was highlighted as a resource-intensive exercise for civil society, and there was an open question as to how civil society could best be supported to engage in the process. Whilst connecting with wider networks was seen as a significant element to this, there was also a recognition that such coordination was not resource-free either.

NAP6 Co-creation Process

A summary of the OGP process was presented, including the 4 key elements of the overall process (planning, outreach, development, feedback) and the 6 stages of the co-creation process itself, from analysing inputs through to finalisation. Key dates for the coming year were also shared, along with plans to review the Terms of Reference for the MSF.

Discussion centred around the approach to balancing ambition and practicalities through the 'network-of-networks' approach to ensure the process was both meaningful and linked to wider civil society-government engagement. There was recognition that the co-creation process is a two-way street, requiring both government and civil society to engage with one another constructively, sometimes on difficult topics, and that agreement may not always be reached. When this happens, the key element was for effective communication regarding these differences.

Capability development was a recurring theme, with suggestions for support from the OGP Support Unit, making best use of existing conferences and events, and the potential for 'Open Government Academies' as shared training opportunities. Discussion extended to educating people across the political spectrum on Open Government, potentially through [All-Party Parliamentary Groups](#) (APPGs), scrutiny committees and select committees. It was noted that there are already APPGs on [anti-corruption and responsible tax](#), and [deliberative democracy](#). Ministerial engagement on Open Government was seen as an important factor in helping to promote this agenda.

The MSF was reminded of the need to publish the plan for the co-creation process at least 2 weeks before the start of the process.

Next MSF

The next provisional date for an MSF is Wednesday 19th April