



# Make Your Ideas Count

A practical guide to the Open Government Call for Evidence

Deadline | 5pm on Monday 25 May 2026




**UK OPEN**  
**GOVERNMENT**  
CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK





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## 1. Why open government matters

Open government is not a buzzword or a slogan.

It is both a way of governing and a reform agenda - how decisions are made, and the practical work that lets people see, scrutinise and shape them.

It is the difference between systems that happen to people and systems people can question, correct and improve. Government done *with* people, not just *to* them.

It creates the conditions in which trust can be earned: visible evidence, accountable decisions, and a shared role in shaping outcomes.

And it has never been more important.

From disinformation that has fuelled riots to foreign interference in elections, from AI reshaping public services without meaningful transparency to corruption costing taxpayers millions - these are not abstract problems.

They are visible on our streets, in our public services, in our economy and in our politics.

From the person seeking advice, confused and without answers, because an algorithm has made an unexplained decision about their income, to the community charity, once focused on support, now countering misinformation so children get vaccinated and communities remain cohesive.

From the business leader watching corruption distort markets and benefit bad actors, to the journalist seeking data for an untold story on potential environmental crime.

From the researcher whose evidence could improve policy, to the campaigner whose casework shows where systems are failing.


None of this gets fixed by accident. It takes three things:


### a. A formal mechanism for civil society and government to work together:

- The [UK Open Government Network](#) which coordinates civil society input into the UK National Action Plan process
- The [Open Government Partnership](#) is the wider global alliance of 74 national governments, 150 local governments and thousands of civil society organisations. In October the UK will serve as global Co-Chair of OGP for 12 months.

**b. Commitment from government.** The Civil Service Strategy Unit within Cabinet Office coordinates open government activity across the UK, with Minister Chris Ward MP the relevant portfolio holder.

**c. You.** Open government only works when people outside government are connected to those inside it. This is a chance for people, charities, businesses, campaigners, researchers and communities to suggest practical changes that would make government more transparent, accountable and responsive - and to





work alongside civil servants to turn those ideas into policy commitments. You do not need to be a policy expert.

## 2. The National Action Plan and the Call for Evidence

Every few years, government and civil society work together to develop a plan of practical reforms called a National Action Plan for Open Government. It is one of the main ways people outside government can help shape how government becomes more open, accountable and responsive. The forthcoming plan will be the [UK's seventh](#).

Reforms typically, but not exclusively, cover the areas of [anti-corruption and integrity, civic space, climate and environment, digital governance, fiscal openness, inclusion, justice, public participation, and right to information](#).

This list is not exhaustive. There are many other areas that could make excellent additions to the UK National Action Plan, so do not feel limited by these themes.

The Call for Evidence is the first stage in developing the next UK National Action Plan.

It is coordinated by the Civil Service Strategy Unit within the Cabinet Office and is open to anyone - including charities, community groups, businesses, academics, campaigners, researchers and members of the public.

The purpose of the Call for Evidence is not to ask for fully developed policy proposals. It is to identify areas where government, civil society and others could work together to develop practical commitments that improve transparency, accountability and public participation.


That means short, focused ideas are welcome. You do not need to have all the answers. At this stage, the most useful submissions are those that identify a clear problem or opportunity, suggest what could change, and show why it matters.


Submissions are made through a [GOV.UK online form](#).

Each idea should be no more than 250 words and should focus on a single theme or topic. You can submit more than one idea by completing the form again after your first submission.

## 3. What makes an idea stronger

A submission is most effective when they are concise and focused on a specific area of interest. You do not need to address the government's three published criteria explicitly but thinking about them will help you write a stronger submission.

- a. **Relevance:** Is the idea relevant to transparency, accountability or participation in government decisions? To see, scrutinise, and shape government?
  - b. **Ambition:** Does it propose something that would move the government beyond its current state of practice?
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- c. **Co-creation potential:** Is there enough interest, capability and capacity in both government and civil society to meaningfully work together on this?

What strong ideas usually have in common

A strong submission does not need to be technical, but it usually does three things:

- Identifies a specific problem or opportunity related to transparency, accountability or participation.
- Suggests a practical action government could take.
- Shows why this is something government and civil society could realistically and usefully work on together.

## 4. A simple structure for 250 words

You can structure your submission however you like. One approach that works well:


**The problem or opportunity (2–3 sentences):** What is the transparency, accountability or participation issue? Why does it matter?

**What could be done (2–3 sentences):** What kind of commitment would help? You can be broad, for example: make it easier to see how local councils spend public money or give people more say in local NHS decisions. Or more specific: require councils to publish monthly spending over £500 in a searchable, comparable format or require NHS trusts to publish how patient feedback influenced major service changes.

**Why this is feasible (1–2 sentences):** Is there existing work to build on? Are there willing partners? Are you part of a network of likeminded organisations? Identify relevant networks or groups if you can

**Interest in co-creation (1 sentence):** State whether you or your organisation would be willing to contribute to developing this further.

### Remember

- Concise and focused is encouraged. The government has explicitly encouraged short submissions.
  - You do not need to be an expert. Lived experience and frontline insight are valuable.
  - You can choose to enter multiple ideas after sharing your first idea within a single form. Or use multiple forms if you wish.
  - If your idea proceeds to co-creation, there will be opportunities for more detailed input later. If your idea does not succeed you will be informed.
  - Similar ideas will be grouped together to identify themes for further development
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## 5. From vague to specific: how to sharpen your idea

The most common weakness in submissions is being too general. Here is how to move from a broad concern to a strong, actionable idea:

- **Transparency and AI**

Weak	Better	Strong
<i>“Government should be more open about AI.”</i>	<i>“Departments should publish more information about where algorithms are used in public services.”</i>	<i>“NAP7 should commit departments to publish standardised records of algorithmic tools used in public-facing decisions, with a timetable for adoption and regular reporting.”</i>

- **Public participation**

Weak	Better	Strong
<i>“Consultations should be improved.”</i>	<i>“Government should involve people earlier in policy design.”</i>	<i>“NAP7 should pilot an early-engagement participation standard for selected policy areas, including public feedback reports showing how input influenced decisions.”</i>

- **Procurement**

Weak	Better	Strong
<i>“Government spending should be more transparent.”</i>	<i>“It should be easier to see what government is buying and from whom.”</i>	<i>“NAP7 should commit to publishing contracting data to a common open standard, with a timetable for department-level adoption and progress reporting.”</i>

- **Local accountability**

Weak	Better	Strong
<i>“Councils should be more open.”</i>	<i>“Residents should be able to find and compare information about local decisions and spending.”</i>	<i>“NAP7 should develop a baseline standard for local transparency information in reusable formats, piloted with willing councils and place-based networks.”</i>



## 6. Prompts to get you started

If you are not sure what to write about, try answering one of these questions:

- ▶ Where is government not transparent enough, and what difference would greater openness make?
- ▶ Where is public accountability too weak, and what would strengthen it?
- ▶ Where do people need a stronger voice in how government decisions are made?
- ▶ What information does government hold that should be more accessible?
- ▶ Where could technology be used more openly and accountably?
- ▶ What has worked well in open government that should be expanded or protected?

## 7. Seeking inspiration?

The Open Government Partnership's [Open Gov Guide](#) and [Data Dashboard](#) contain a wealth of examples of reforms implemented by other countries on a wide range of open government topics.


Specific Open Gov Guide chapter links are included with the examples below. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism has also published a [Co-Creation Brief](#) which includes recommendations for policy areas to consider in the development of the National Action Plan.

Past National Action Plans have led to:

- **Beneficial ownership transparency.** A UK commitment that exposed Russian kleptocrats hiding billions in UK property - and that has since been adopted by over 100 countries.
- **Open contracting.** Opening up how government spends taxpayer money on contracts. More than 50 governments have now followed the UK's lead, helping fight corruption and improve value for money.
- **Algorithmic transparency.** New requirements for departments to publish how they use AI in decisions that affect people's lives - making it possible for the first time to challenge those decisions.

These commitments did not start inside government. They started with people outside government - campaigners, charities, businesses, academics and members of the public - putting ideas into processes like this one.

Several began as short, specific suggestions not dissimilar from what you might write. This Call for Evidence is one practical door that is open. Walking through it - even with a half-formed idea - is worth your time.





## 8. A quick self-check before you submit

Before you press submit, ask yourself:

- ✓ Is this about transparency, accountability or participation in government?
- ✓ Is it specific enough that someone could act on it?
- ✓ Does it go beyond asking government simply to 'do better'?
- ✓ Can you imagine a department and a civil society partner working on it together?

If you can answer yes to most of these, your idea is on the right track. It does not need to be perfect - the co-creation phase is where ideas get developed further.

## 9. Practical details

- **Where to submit:** Via the GOV.UK form at: [www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/seventh-uk-national-action-plan-for-open-government-call-for-evidence](https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/seventh-uk-national-action-plan-for-open-government-call-for-evidence)
- **Deadline:** 5pm on Monday 25 May 2026
- **Questions:** Email the UK Open Government Network at [UK@Opengovernment.org.uk](mailto:UK@Opengovernment.org.uk) or the Cabinet Office open government team at [open-government@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:open-government@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)
- **Sign up to the UK OGN newsletter:** Email [UK@opengovernment.org.uk](mailto:UK@opengovernment.org.uk)

### What happens next:

Submissions will be analysed alongside internal government engagement to identify themes with potential for co-creation.

The [Multi-Stakeholder Forum](#) - a meeting which brings together government and civil society representatives to oversee the National Action Plan process - will consider which themes to take forward, with co-creation expected from mid-2026.

*Produced by the UK Open Government Network ([opengovernment.org.uk](https://opengovernment.org.uk)). UK OGN coordinates civil society participation in the UK's National Action Plans for Open Government.*

