ADVANCING OPEN GOVERNMENT IN THE CARRIBEAN:
STRATEGIES AND TOOLS TO INCREASE TRANSPARENCY AND CITIZENS PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC POLICY

Tuesday, July 6th

Zoom Platform

Background

One of the main purposes of the Organization of American States (OAS) is to promote and strengthen democratic governance in the Americas. As such, the OAS is leading numerous initiatives to raise awareness, facilitate dialogue, and identify collaborative solutions for complex and interrelated problems related to democratic governance. However, the threats to democracy are each day more complex and more related to the exercise of democracy and civic space once a government has been democratically elected. Today, citizens have more information, have more rights and want more participation in the development and implementation of public policies that affect their lives. Their demands and expectations from their governments are higher. They want quality public services delivered effectively, rapid responses to their requests, greater transparency, and access to public information. The relationship between governments and citizens is rapidly evolving.

In the last decade, we have observed a profound erosion of trust in public institutions which leads to a negative effect on people's satisfaction with democracy. To address this issue, we could look for innovative ways to collaborate, to prepare governments to be accountable and to answer effectively to citizens' demands addressing challenges from different angles.

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Hence, in 2015, OAS Secretary General, Luis Almagro, launched the OAS School of Governance which seeks to offer training opportunities that provide skills, strategies and methodologies that contribute to innovate and improve the relationship between citizens and public institutions, to promote more engagement in civic life and facilitate citizen participation as well as to have more transparent, effective and participatory public institutions.

The OAS School of Governance is oriented to public officials, leaders from unions, civil society, and the private sector who are interested in contributing to improve democratic governance in their communities, cities and countries. Different training opportunities, virtual, on-site or combination of both, have been developed in areas related to public administration. The OAS School of Governance seeks to provide skills to use new technologies and innovative methods to contribute to have more transparent, accountable and effective public institutions.

Since 2012, the concept of Open Government has gained relevance in the region as a paradigm of public management. Open government promotes the right of every citizen to have access to public information and be able to exercise effective public oversight and participate in public decision-making. Open Government promotes transparency, accountability, collaboration and participation in public management. It implies a new collaborative relationship between government and citizens where there is a permanent citizen engagement, and where technology plays a strategic role.

Since the Open Government Partnership (OGP) was founded in 2011, it has become a major global platform for reforms that tackle corruption, give citizens a stronger voice in their government and make democracies more resilient. It has expanded to 78 national members, a large growing cohort of subnational and city members, and thousands of civil society organizations. Together, reformers in government and civil society have used OGP to co-create over 4000 specific commitments, of which over 700 have profoundly changed government policy or practice, according to independent evaluation.

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At the global level, OGP has provided a platform for a leader-level coalition of champions for open government and democracy, to build back better democracies, in the context of COVID-19 and the persistent rise of illiberal democracy and authoritarianism. As OGP approaches its tenth anniversary in 2021, it provides a ready-made, robust and modern platform for the Caribbean countries to advance their goals of support for democracy, rule of law and anti-corruption, bring an open response and open recovery to the pandemic, improve public services, fight climate change and implement the Escazu agreement, among other thematic policy areas where OGP members are working.

Program Purpose:

This program aims to increase transparency and citizen participation in the design, development and implementation of public policies in the Caribbean region by promoting open government principles and practices in public administration.

Program description

The program combines capacity development with leadership training and networking elements. The program entails online training sessions, in a 4-week period, with lectures, workshops, presentations and group discussions related to the implementation of open government strategies and practices. OAS and OGP specialists and guest speakers from different countries and partnering organizations will provide tools and strategies on how to increase transparency, accountability and citizen participation in public institutions. At the end of the program, participants will have to present draft open government commitments.

This program will benefit policy makers, public officials, civil society representatives, social and public tech entrepreneurs and citizens in general by contributing to more transparent, accountable, and effective public institutions.

Target Audience

Public officials, civil society and private sector participants from Caribbean countries with a position to influence and become agents of change for the promotion of open government principles and practices in their institutions and communities.

Full scholarships for this course will be offered to 30 qualifying applicants.

*Limited capacity: 30 participants

Methodology

- All sessions will be in English
- Speakers will present each subject and will set the agenda and bibliography for each subject.
- Student's participation, critical analysis, group discussions, exchange of experiences among participants and debate will be encouraged in each session.
- Practical tools and methodologies will be provided for the design, development and implementation of open government strategies, practices and commitments.
- There will be opportunities to hear from open government practitioners who will share their experiences through presentations, workshops and round tables.
- Teams will be established as working groups to develop a final project to be presented at the last session. This project will entail to develop a tangible solution through an open government commitment to address a specific challenge in their country, institution or community. Each team will be composed by government and civil society participants.

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Expected results

- Better understanding of Open Government principles and how to implement them.
- Raised awareness on benefits of implementing open government practices to prevent corruption.
- Collaborative links established among participants from government and civil society.
- Draft proposals on Open Government commitments drafted.

Application Requirements

- Citizenship of a Caribbean OAS Member State.
- Updated Curriculum Vitae.
- One letter from the institution where the candidate works stating that the program will be beneficial to the entire institution.
- One letter in which the participant explains why he/she is a good candidate and how the program will have an impact on his/her institution or community (maximum 300 words).

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PRELIMINARY AGENDA

AM/PM	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Tuesday 2:00-4:30 PM	**July 6th** **OPENING REMARKS** *OAS & OGP authorities* **PANEL WITH PARTICIPATION OF HIGH AUTHORITIES FROM**: *Treasury Board of Canada* *US (TBC)* *UK (TBC)*	**July 13th** **Access to Public Information and Transparency** *OAS* **Open Data** **Open Data Charter** *DEPM, DEVCA, & ODC*	**July 20th** **Public Procurement** *DEPM/OAS* **Examples of Open Contracting practices** *Open Contracting*	**July 27th** **Open Government experiences in Local Government : Concrete cases** *OGP Rudi Bormann & OAS Open Government fellows*
Wednesday 3:00 – 5:00	**July 7th** **Participants introductions and team building session** *OAS*	**July 14th** **Leadership or Teambuilding workshop** *Andrés Marques-Lara (UFaciliate) [TBC]*	**July 21th** **Group discussion** *(select challenge to address through OG commitments)* *OAS & OGP*	**July 28th** **Group discussions** (Break –out rooms to develop strategy/project) *OAS & OGP*
Thursday 2:00-4:30 PM	**July 8 th** **Open Government 101 and examples of practices implemented** *Alonso Cerdán y Jose Garcia, OGP* **Tools to implement Open Government** *(IRM reports)*	**July 15th** **Workshop on Open Data** *DEPM/OAS, DEVCA, & Datasketch*	**July 22th** **Workshop** **Co-design for Open Governments** *Collaborative Initiatives* *DEPM/OAS and Kubaldi*	**July 29th** **How OAS & OGP can help promote Open Government principles** **Project presentations** Closing ceremony

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