

Guidance Note: Joining CoST

Introduction

There are three options for applying the CoST approach to infrastructure. The first option is open during competitive cycles which are announced on the [CoST website](#) and the second and third options are open continuously.

- 1. A government with its private sector and civil society partners can join as a member.** This membership category is aimed at those who are committed to improving transparency and accountability in public infrastructure investment and see CoST as being central to that reform effort.
- 2. A government can join CoST as an affiliate.** This membership category is aimed at those who are committed to improving transparency and accountability in public infrastructure investment and see CoST as a source of help and advice that can support that reform effort.
- 3. Anyone can use the freely available range of tools and resources** from our website, without joining CoST, to aide their efforts to improve transparency and accountability in public and public/private infrastructure investment.

This guidance note explains each option including the support available and the rights and responsibilities associated with each option. It is designed to help you decide which option is best for you. It should be read in conjunction with the other guidance notes available in the series.¹

It also explains how to apply to join CoST as a member or affiliate, what should be included in an application and where it should be submitted. It concludes by describing the relationship between the two categories of membership and the circumstances in which members might move between them at various stages of their reform process.

BOX 1: HONDURAS JOINS COST

In 2014, the Government of Honduras approached the CoST International Secretariat (CoST IS) to express their interest in joining the initiative. The World Bank Office in Honduras played a critical role in persuading the Government of the added value of CoST and helped to facilitate the initial engagement process.

The engagement process took just three months as the Government was keen to move quickly. The process included several video conferences organised by the World Bank Office where CoST IS familiarised an interim Multi-Stakeholder Support Group and the CoST Champion and Minister for Infrastructure, Roberto Ordonez, with CoST. CoST IS then supported a Senior Adviser to the President with developing an application.

The application was of an extremely high standard as it clearly set out how CoST would complement Government reforms. It included a detailed 18-month implementation plan that included a list of 13 road sector projects from two procuring entities for testing the disclosure and assurance process, how a permanent Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG) would be established and a series of capacity building and training workshops. The application was the first to include letters of support from the private sector and civil society demonstrating that the Government was committed to a multi-stakeholder approach. The Government allocated \$200,000 to implement CoST from a governance and anti-corruption component of a road sector programme funded by the World Bank.



¹ Other guidance notes can be found on the CoST website at: <https://bit.ly/2L8dxCc>

Joining as a full member

As mentioned above, applications for full membership are open during competitive cycles which set a fixed number of places and are announced on the [CoST website](#).

- Membership is open to any national or sub-national part of government and its partners in the private sector and civil society, and to individual procuring entities and megaprojects.
- It is aimed at those who are committed to improving transparency and accountability in public infrastructure investment and see CoST as being central to that reform effort.
- Members commit to adopting the full CoST approach including multi-stakeholder working, disclosure, assurance and promoting social accountability.
- The CoST Board monitors the performance of members and continued membership is contingent on the CoST Board being satisfied that meaningful progress is maintained.
- Members are subject to the CoST [performance monitoring procedures](#). Continued failure to perform can result in membership being revoked.

Membership comes with the following rights and responsibilities:

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
● Use of 'CoST member' branding in your communications	● Observe and promote the CoST principles
● Participation in the governance of CoST, including electing positions on the CoST Board	● Establish a Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG), or demonstrate to the satisfaction of the CoST Board, how you will promote multi-stakeholder working using an alternative approach
● Members in low-income countries receive support from CoST International Secretariat (CoST IS) at no cost to themselves	● Disclose information in the CoST Infrastructure Data Standard (CoST IDS) format or Open Contracting for Infrastructure Data Standard (OC4IDS)
● Members in upper middle and high-income countries can purchase support from CoST IS at discounted rates	● Implement an assurance process
● Participation in regional and international CoST events	● Establish a legal mandate on data disclosure within three years of becoming a Member
	● Promote social accountability
	● Submit quarterly progress reports to CoST IS

Support

The support CoST IS can provide to members includes:

- Guidance and training on the CoST core features of disclosure, assurance, multi-stakeholder working and social accountability
- Guidance and training on how to initiate a CoST programme including establishing a multi-stakeholder group and national secretariat
- Advice on good practice from other members and the facilitation of peer learning
- Advice on accessing financial assistance

- Advice and support on political engagement and raising awareness of CoST
- The opportunity for low income and low-middle income countries to apply for grant funding on a competitive basis
- Advice on studies that identify the potential added value of CoST and how the core features could be mainstreamed into government systems.



Engagement

The engagement process can be used by potential applicants to discuss if and how membership of CoST might benefit them. Whilst the application is usually led by government with its private sector and civil society partners, the process of engagement can be initiated by any stakeholder. Before contacting CoST IS, you are advised to:

- Review the guidance notes on the [CoST website](#) and consider how it could be relevant in your circumstances.
- Where appropriate, contact representatives of government, the private sector and civil society to assess their interest in CoST and if appropriate, involve them in the engagement process.
- If then you would like to pursue your interest in CoST, please [contact the International Secretariat](#) explaining the reasons for your interest and describing what discussions, if any, have taken place between representatives of the three sectors.

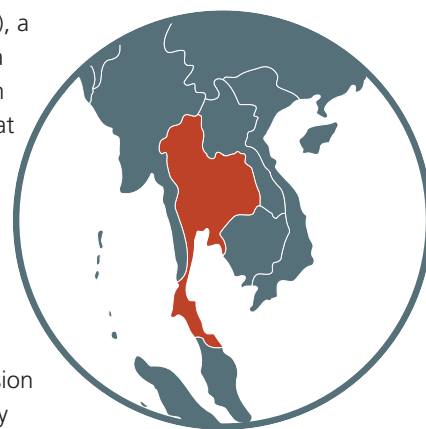
The CoST IS will respond, in most cases seeking additional information and proposing an online discussion. The dialogue will continue until a decision has been made on whether to apply to join CoST as a member. The CoST IS can also visit and hold in-person discussions, if it is considered of value to the engagement process. Whilst the engagement process is typically carried out during the membership competitive cycle, CoST IS is happy to speak with potential applicants at any time to answer any queries relating to membership or CoST more broadly.

BOX 2: CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATES THAILAND APPLICATION DURING POLITICAL UPHEAVAL

Following the 2014 military coup, CoST was approached by Anti-Corruption Thailand (ACT), a network of anti-corruption activists with strong roots in the private sector. It had obtained a mandate from the Thai Government to explore if CoST could potentially support the reform efforts which were underway. Given the backdrop of the military coup, it was important that CoST IS visited Thailand to meet representatives of government, industry and civil society and assess the prospects for a CoST Thailand programme. The assessment was made with the support of the British Embassy in Bangkok who helped to convene stakeholders.

The response of most domestic and international stakeholders was pragmatic. They expressed concern about the coup, but also recognised that its aftermath presented an opportunity to accelerate anti-corruption reforms. This support led to the State Enterprise Policy Office submitting an application in 2015 that focused on the \$(US) 2.5 million extension to Bangkok airport - CoST's first megaproject. Government leadership of CoST subsequently shifted to the Comptroller General's Department. Since then data on 260 infrastructure projects has been disclosed.

Thailand's experience demonstrates how it is possible to initiate a CoST programme, even during periods of political upheaval. In fact, it was political upheaval in this case that opened an opportunity for reform. It demonstrates how a non-government organisation with strong anti-corruption credentials, in this case ACT, can be very effective in bringing stakeholders together in the early stages of joining CoST. It also illustrates how an international partner, in this case the British Embassy can encourage and support those leading the reform effort.



Making an application

During CoST competitive cycles, membership applications should respond to points 1-3 below. Please note all applications should be in English.

1. Submission of a letter to the CoST Board from government, or an alternative organisation with government endorsement indicating:

- A desire to enhance transparency and accountability in public infrastructure investment
- A willingness to promote the [mission and vision of CoST](#)
- Administrative arrangements, including who the official contact will be to coordinate with CoST IS
- Details of a scheduled public announcement to confirm the intent to implement a programme for increasing transparency and accountability in the provision of public infrastructure
- A commitment from at least one procuring entity to participate in the initial implementation of the programme
- A commitment to liaise and share information with CoST IS
- Letters of support or alternative evidence of support from government, the private sector and civil society.

2. An implementation plan, indicating:

- Details of a short-term inception period in which disclosure and assurance are tested and refined (usually) on a small number of projects, multi-stakeholder arrangements put in place and consideration given to the promotion of social accountability
- A commitment to develop a more detailed strategic plan after the inception period
- A commitment to establish a legal or policy mandate on data disclosure within three years of joining CoST.

3. Budget and financing plan indicating:

- Evidence of government or other resources available for the inception period
- Where the applicant is a low-income country and it intends to request financial grant assistance from CoST IS, a request for funding including the financial management procedures that will be followed and details of expenditure.

In all instances, CoST IS will be available to provide support and advice whilst the application is being developed. A pro-forma application is available on the [CoST website](#) to help structure your application. Applications should be addressed to the [Chair of the CoST Board](#) and submitted to CoST@infrastructuretransparency.org.



Joining as an affiliate member

The CoST Board continues to accept applications to join as an affiliate member on a rolling basis.

- Affiliate membership is open to any national or sub-national part of government and to individual procuring entities and megaprojects.
- This category is aimed at those who are committed to improving transparency and accountability in public and public/private infrastructure investment and see CoST as a source of support and advice in that reform effort.
- Affiliate members adopt and adapt those aspects of the CoST approach that they consider most useful and appropriate in their circumstances.
- The CoST Board does monitor the progress of members in this category and continued membership does not imply that CoST endorses or approves of their reform effort.
- Affiliate members publish progress reports and through this mechanism are accountable to their stakeholders.
- Affiliate members are not subject to the CoST performance procedures. However, the CoST Board reserves the right to periodically review if affiliate members are meeting their responsibilities (described below). Such reviews might include requests for documentation, telephone interviews and/or in-person interviews. A failure to meet responsibilities, or to respond to Board requests for information, can result in affiliate membership being revoked.

Affiliate membership comes with the following rights and responsibilities:

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use of 'CoST affiliate member' branding in your communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Observe and promote the CoST principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Affiliate members in low-income and lower middle-income countries receive up to six hours of technical assistance per month at no cost to themselves. Additional support can be purchased at discounted rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Quarterly publication of progress reports based on an agreed set of indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Affiliate members in upper-middle and high-income countries can purchase support at discounted rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the CoST International Secretariat (CoST IS) that records the rights and responsibilities of both parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Participation in regional and international CoST events	

Support

The support CoST IS can provide to affiliates includes:

- Guidance and training on the CoST core features of disclosure, assurance, multi-stakeholder working and social accountability
- Guidance and training on how to initiate a CoST programme including establishing a multi-stakeholder group and national secretariat
- Advice on good practice from other members and the facilitation of peer learning
- Advice on accessing financial assistance

- Advice and support on political engagement and raising awareness of CoST
- Advice on studies that identify the potential added value of CoST and how the core features could be mainstreamed into government systems.

Engagement

It is recommended that potential applicants engage with CoST IS, to discuss their needs and help them decide if and how affiliate membership of CoST might benefit them. Whilst the application is typically led by government, the process of engagement can be initiated by government, the private sector or civil society. Before contacting CoST IS, you are advised to:

- Review the materials available on the [CoST website](#) and consider how it could be relevant in your circumstances
- Where appropriate, contact representatives of government, the private sector and civil society to assess their interest in CoST and if appropriate, involve them in the engagement process
- If then you would like to pursue your interest in CoST, please [contact CoST IS](#) explaining the reasons for your interest and describing what discussions, if any, have taken place between representatives of the three sectors.

CoST IS will respond, in most cases seeking additional information and proposing an online discussion. The dialogue will continue until a decision has been made on whether to apply to join CoST. CoST IS can also visit and hold in-person discussions, if it is considered of value to the engagement process.

Making an application

Applications for affiliate membership should include the submission of a letter to the CoST Board from government, or an alternative organisation with government endorsement indicating:

- A desire to enhance transparency and accountability in public infrastructure investment
- A willingness to promote the mission and vision of CoST
- Administrative arrangements, including official contact for coordination with CoST IS
- Details of a scheduled public announcement to confirm the intent to implement a programme for increasing transparency and accountability in the provision of public infrastructure
- A commitment from at least one procuring entity to participate in the initial implementation of the programme
- A commitment to liaise and share information with CoST IS.

In all instances, CoST IS will be available to provide support and advice whilst the application is being developed. A pro-forma application is available on the [CoST website](#) to help structure your application. Applications should be addressed to the Chair of the [CoST Board](#) and submitted to CoST@infrastructuretransparency.org.



Moving between membership categories

It is possible to move between member and affiliate categories in both directions and at the discretion of the CoST Board. A member, for example, might consider that reforms have been institutionalised to a point where some elements of the full CoST approach are no longer necessary. In such circumstances, switching to affiliate membership would enable them to continue benefitting from an association with CoST, but in a way that had fewer responsibilities and therefore constituted a 'lighter touch' relationship. Alternatively, affiliate membership could be the starting point for a reform effort that needs to build support and gain momentum before switching to become a full member during a competitive cycle once they are in place and there is appetite for a more substantial effort based on the full CoST approach. There is no hierarchy between categories of membership. They are different options and prospective members must decide which is most relevant in their circumstances.

Use of CoST tools and approaches by non-members

Through its website CoST has made a range of tools and resources freely available to anyone involved in improving the transparency and accountability of public investment in infrastructure. You do not have to be a member or an affiliate member to use these resources. Please note that non-members who make use of these resources have no right to use CoST branding or to give the impression that CoST endorses their efforts. The CoST International Secretariat would be interested to hear about your experience.



GLOSSARY

Legal or policy mandate:	An act, law, policy, regulation, decree or other instrument that mandates the disclosure of all 40 data points included in the CoST IDS or OC4IDS.
CoST Infrastructure Data Standard (CoST IDS):	A set of 40 data points that are disclosed routinely and periodically over the entire project lifecycle.
Open Contracting for Infrastructure Data Standard (OC4IDS):	A tool that defines how the CoST IDS data points should be disclosed.
Megaproject:	Large-scale, complex infrastructure investments that typically cost \$(US) 1 billion or more.
Procuring entity:	Any part of government responsible for procuring infrastructure works and/or services.