

PURPOSE

The purpose of the PIFS CSO Engagement Strategy is to clearly define processes and principles for engagement. The strategy aims to render a coordinated approach to engagement, avoid any overlaps and/or unintentional exclusion of interested stakeholders. As a result of the strategy, stakeholders should understand how PIFS and CSOs will engage to participate in the definition of regional priorities, develop solutions and jointly assess, monitor and evaluate the results and outcomes of regional decisions, initiatives and priorities. The strategy is a mechanism that supports engagement and participation in the implementation of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

The primary aim for engagement is to promote a constructive dialogue to render a more informed policy debate. PIFS Staff seek more direct and regular conversations with CSOs to better understand different perspectives; there is a recognition that engagement needs to be more mainstreamed and systematic, and that CSOs bring a diversity of perspectives, experiences and networks that can enrich the regional policy dialogue and broaden the reach of implementation.

Specific objectives and outcomes

The overarching objective is to promote meaningful PIFS-CSO engagement that renders effective and relevant regional policy contributing to the attainment of the Pacific Vision articulated in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

The specific objective of the PIFS-CSO Engagement strategy is to provide clarity for PIFS Staff and PIFS Stakeholders around the protocols, processes and purpose of engagement.

The following outcomes are anticipated:

- PIFS' Staff value, understand and consistently adhere to the protocols and guidelines for engagement as articulated in this strategy
- CSO Stakeholders have a clear understanding of the various 'points of engagement' and effectively leverage these to contribute to regional policy development and implementation in a way that reciprocates the principles of engagement outlined in this strategy.

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

In keeping with the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the values of **inclusivity**, **equity** and **equality** will form the basic principles for the strategy, where the proponents 'strive for effective, open and honest relationships and inclusive and enduring partnerships – based on mutual accountability and respect...' This strategy aims to enable a **consistent, systematic and transparent approach** to PIFS-CSO engagement where the interests of a diverse group of stakeholders are given the **space** to present their views.

As a matter of principle, perspectives from each of the Forum Island Countries need to be represented in Forum events, as well as ensuring the involvement of a diverse spectrum of interest groups. In keeping with this principle, options to make PIFS-CSO engagements as **accessible** as possible will be sought while promoting due respect for the diverse nature of CSOs and their constituent groups. The environment for engagement needs to enable participation by all parties (not just the dominant, sophisticated ones). Organisations must declare who they represent and the reason for their interest; this declaration of representation needs to be based on previous consultation with a constituent group.

It is important that all engagements are handled with professionalism and mutual respect. All stakeholders adhere to the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness.¹ CSOs are valued partners in the realization of the vision articulated in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and PIFS will endeavour to ensure their participation in every stage of the drive towards deeper regionalism. This means participation of civil society as an equal partner throughout the policy development process (concept to implementation). To this end, approaches to engagement need to be sincere, wherein constructive inputs are valued and all stakeholders maintain a sense of mutual accountability to derive the best outcomes possible for the Pacific Region.

GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The primary point of contact for CSOs within the Secretariat is the Civil Society Engagement Officer, who will assist CSOs in identifying the appropriate avenues through which to engage with the Forum Secretariat. PIFS works with an established list of CSO points of contact in each country who disseminate information to CSO networks at the national level.

The NSA Team at PIFS will work with the relevant PIFS staff to support their adherence to the following guidelines for engagement processes:

1. Notify stakeholders at least one week in advance of (in-country) meetings, and at least one month in advance for meetings requiring travel to another country.
2. Endeavour to provide timely access to relevant information in accessible language.
3. Allow sufficient time for submissions, responses, inputs to agenda, responses to minutes etc.
4. Acknowledge receipt of any written inputs, enquiries or correspondence in a timely fashion. Where possible, this response should outline any relevant processes and articulate how the stakeholder's views will be/have been taken into account.
5. Run consultative processes at stages where they can still impact on formulation.
6. Provide clarity around the role of CSOs in regional policy processes coordinated by PIFS
7. Ensure engagements are as inclusive and accessible as possible. Use multiple 'points of engagement' such as teleconferencing, social media, website, email updates; seek national as well as regional CSO voices.
8. Seek prior consent for any direct references to meeting participants/their organisations in any articles or press releases.

Specifically the role of the PIFS NSA Team in supporting this Engagement Strategy is to:

1. Ensure CSOs have access to a PIFS focal point at the Secretariat and in-country.
2. Establish and maintain a database of CSO stakeholders in all Forum countries to facilitate direct communication (and reduce reliance on intermediaries).
3. Develop a joint calendar of events with CSO stakeholders and circulate any updates to the calendar on a monthly basis.
4. Support increased capacity for engagement through the NSA Program
5. Maintain up to date information online such as a calendar with event details (including date, time, venue, purpose, participation local/regional, registration details, contact) agendas, recordings and minutes.

¹ <http://cso-effectiveness.org/-istanbul-principles,067-.html>

What can CSOs do to facilitate effective engagement?

1. Inform focal points of their own areas of interest, entry points, and active networks.
2. Be clear and realistic about the role CSOs can play in policy development and dialogue.
3. Sharing of information with relevant constituent groups, where relevant seeking feedback/input to relay back into the policy dialogue.
4. Reporting back on outcomes of engagement processes to constituent groups.
5. Commitment to the Istanbul 8 Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness.
6. Position papers to declare representation, mandate, include endorsements.
7. Ongoing participation in dialogue (rather than dropping in and out), or get informed before re-entering a discussion.
8. Contribute to the discussion as a representative (rather than bringing individual perspectives)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PIFS-CSO ENGAGEMENT

The full version of the PIFS CSO Engagement Strategy can be downloaded from the PIFS Website:
<http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/strategic-partnerships-coordination/nsa-engagement/>

The strategy is a living document and your feedback and input is always welcome. The PIFS Non-State Actor Program Team have carriage of the PIFS CSO Engagement Strategy and welcome your views. They can be contacted by emailing info.cso@forumsec.org

For more general information about the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat:

- Follow us on Twitter [@ForumSEC](https://twitter.com/ForumSEC)
- Follow us on Facebook [@Pacific.Islands.Forum.Secretariat](https://www.facebook.com/Pacific.Islands.Forum.Secretariat)
Register for general email updates from PIFS by entering your email address in the "Join our community" box on our website homepage: <http://www.forumsec.org/> -
- Submit a query directly to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
<http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/about-us/contact/>

Points of engagement – summary

Means of engagement	Purpose	Participation	Format
Policy seminars	Raise awareness of regional policy issues	Attendance by any interested parties in Suva. Accessible online for other areas. Sound recordings available.	Public broadcast of a policy debate
CSO networking lunches	Informal networking, relationship development, information sharing	Any Suva based Regionally focussed CSOs	Monthly informal gathering, light lunch provided
PIFS-NSA Executive meeting	Direct engagement between PIFS and CSO executives on matters relating to PIFS work, and issues of regional importance	Open to Regionally focused CSOs. National Umbrella CSOs/focal points may participate by teleconference.	Quarterly meeting chaired by the Secretary General of PIFS in Suva. Agenda set in consultation with CSOs. Minutes circulated to all regionally focused CSOs and national focal points. <i>Small working groups may be established to work on specific issues.</i>
Regional CSO Forum	CSOs from the region get together to discuss regional issues/regional policy development. A mechanism for civil society to develop targeted messages for Leaders/ministers/officials	National level representative CSOs and regionally focused CSOs	2-3 day event held annually. Attendance by application.
FPR Public Policy Process	Identification of ideas for regional initiatives to address the key challenges facing the Pacific.	Any member of the public or organisation can submit an initiative.	Annual call for proposals that are assessed against predetermined 'Tests for regional action'. Selected regional priorities are submitted to Forum Leaders for their consideration. The Specialist Sub-Committee for Regionalism holds consultative processes as part of the assessment process and may call on certain NSAs for technical advice.
Forum Leaders Meeting	CSO engagement with Forum Leaders on regional level issues.	Regional and National CSO representatives from Forum countries	Annual event with dedicated session for CSO Engagement. Opportunity for CSOs to present position papers to Leaders.
Ministerial meetings	CSO engagement with Ministers on regional level issues.	Regional and National CSO representatives from Forum countries	Most meetings have a dedicated session for NSA Engagement.
Forum officials meetings	Arria ² Formula meeting (if called by officials) & Networking event.	Suva based Regional CSOS	Closed meeting, CSOS invited to evening cocktail function

Contact us about how to best access any of these opportunities for engagement: info.cso@forumsec.org

² <http://www.un.org/en/sc/about/methods/bgarriformula.shtml>