



## LISTENING TO THE PACIFIC

### FRAMEWORK FOR PACIFIC REGIONALISM REGIONAL INITIATIVE SUBMISSION TEMPLATE 2016

#### The Framework for Pacific Regionalism

The Framework for Pacific Regionalism represents a high-level commitment to pursuing deeper regionalism and establishes a process for developing and prioritising regional public policy. It articulates the vision, values and objectives of an enhanced Pacific regionalism. It also sets out an inclusive process by which anyone can propose ideas for regional initiatives to address key challenges facing the Pacific. For more information, [click here](#).

#### Regional Issues and Guidance

When preparing your submission, think carefully about why this is an issue of regional significance and why it should be placed before the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum. For further information on the process and types of submissions being sought, please refer to the guideline below.

#### To Submit a Regional Initiative

1. Complete the below regional initiative template below.
2. Submit initiative to the Forum Secretariat by deadline: **5pm, Fiji time, Sunday 10 April 2016.**
3. Initiatives should be submitted to the Forum Secretariat, through one of the following ways:



Email

[FPR@forumsec.org](mailto:FPR@forumsec.org)



Post

C/O Pacific Regionalism Adviser  
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat  
Private Mail Bag  
Suva, Fiji



Hand Delivery

Reception  
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat  
Ratu Sukuna Road  
Suva, Fiji



Fax

+679 322 0215 Attention: Pacific Regionalism Adviser

**Please note that all submissions must be made using this template.**

For more information contact Pacific Regionalism Adviser Joel Nilon at the Forum Secretariat:

Email: [FPR@forumsec.org](mailto:FPR@forumsec.org) | Phone: +679 322 0327

#### Feedback

Any feedback on this template or process: Email [FPR@forumsec.org](mailto:FPR@forumsec.org)



## FRAMEWORK FOR PACIFIC REGIONALISM – REGIONAL INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

*Please complete each section below.*

### 1. Contact Details

*Please provide the following contact details:*

**Name of individual or group submitting initiative**

Pacific Ombudsman Alliance

**Name and position of primary contact**

Carolyn Langley, POA Secretariat

**Email address**

**Phone number**

**Fax number**

**Mailing address**

### 2. Name of Initiative

Supporting regional ombudsmen and allied institutions through the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance



### 3. What is the common regional issue or challenge that this regional initiative aims to address?

*You may also want to address the following: What are the causes of this issue? Are there links to national, regional or international goals/policies?*

***Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.***

Many Pacific nations face the geographic challenges of small land mass and widely dispersed populations, with limited resources and minimal access to both internal and global markets. While there has been economic growth, it has tended to increase inequality of income and opportunity and to distort traditional social structures. Many Pacific Islands nations have poor quality public sector services in key development areas such as health, education and infrastructure and Pacific economies have a high exposure to global economic shocks and environmental disasters. Many countries also experience a fairly shallow democracy, with most public administrations displaying some lack of responsiveness to community concerns.

These issues are being addressed at the national, regional and international level but progress has been disappointingly slow. Attention is often given at the level of international agreements and conventions, on ensuring that each nation has the legislative and other social policy tools it needs to meet national and regional challenges; however, despite the best efforts of the international community and agitation by civil society, there is an inability to translate legislation and policy into effective change on the ground. This weakness in public administration, with a lack of oversight and enforcement, has been identified as a crucial missing element in the economic, human and social development of the Pacific region.

Ombudsmen offices are a key component of effective implementation, as they provide the essential feedback mechanism that enables the on-going learning and adjustment required by successful organisations. They drive better public sector administration, so that governments have the effective tools they need to implement their policies. In the Pacific, Ombudsmen are commonly the only specialist integrity and oversight agency. In three Pacific nations, Ombudsmen have responsibility for the administration of Leadership Codes. In other jurisdictions, they have specialist human rights functions.

The Pacific Ombudsman Alliance (POA) is a Pacific initiated response to a lack of professional support for people in Ombudsman offices and allied integrity agencies. Until the POA was formed, this lack of support led to some agencies becoming almost moribund, unknown among the people they were supposed to serve, ignored by governments, the media and the public service. This situation had in turn contributed to a lack of trust in government and public administration and a regional crisis of democratic legitimacy. The POA was also a response to the call for a regional Ombudsman mechanism that was intended to overcome some of the intractable complications of managing an integrity agency in a small island nation with a low population. The POA has now been operating successfully for eight years. It provides professional support to Ombudsmen and their staff and promotes effective compliant handling institutions as a fundamental part of democratic architecture and an essential strategic tool for driving public sector reform.

Having a regional support mechanism for Ombudsmen provides them with security and allows more confidence in action. Independent integrity agencies can find themselves at times opposing some of the actions or decision of those in power. Governments can be tempted at these times to try to limit or hamper the actions of the integrity agencies. These actions can include taking legal action against the agency, reductions in budgets, failing to recruit in key positions for extended periods of time and distorting the recruitment process. In some jurisdictions, people who work in integrity agencies face on-going personal threats to their well-being. Without the POA, these actions and threats may go unnoticed by the regional community, and impact significantly upon individual office effectiveness. This in turn can affect regional stability.

In September 2015 all Pacific Leaders joined World Leaders in committing to the Sustainable Development Goals. Insuring regional and national policies are effectively implemented will be essential if the Goals are to be achieved. Of particular interest to this submission is Goal 16:

*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*

By ensuring that Pacific people have access to effective dispute resolution, Ombudsmen promote peace, trust and inclusiveness. Such mechanisms also support inclusive economic development by building trust and cultivating an environment that is investment friendly.



In addition, agencies that manage complaints are able to provide Governments with essential information about where resources can be most effectively directed to have the biggest impact upon people's lives.

#### 4. Briefly describe this regional initiative

*You may also want to address the following in this section:*

*How would this initiative contribute to a positive change to the region?*

*Who are the main beneficiaries?*

*How would the initiative contribute to the vision, values and objectives of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism?*

*Has the initiative been carried out previously?*

*What are the key risks in implementing this initiative?*

*Are there any complementary projects and programmes that are currently active?*

***Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.***

The Partnership for Pacific Regionalism envisions a future Pacific enjoying economic development with inclusive and sustainable growth, having peaceful and secure societies with well-run governments and administrations with good governance, justice and rule of law for all, built upon honest relationships and inclusive and enduring partnerships.

This future can be achieved, but it depends upon ensuring the appropriate preconditions exist. One essential precondition is that the relationship between the government and the governed remains one of equality, mutual respect and trust. This can only be achieved with open and honest communication, acknowledging that mistakes can happen and the disputes will arise, but ensuring there are mechanisms to allow those disputes to be resolved. In democratic societies, with elected governments and professional bureaucracies, that mechanism is an Ombudsman's office, or some office that performs a similar function.

Complaint handling systems, administrative investigations and issuing public reports are key elements in any effective integrity system. Complaints provide information that is simply not available in any other way. An agency that can quickly and easily resolve complaints builds trust in the public sector as a whole. Administrative investigations look for systemic failures, and make recommendations that, if implemented, can quickly improve administration. Public reports provide transparency and accountability to citizens.

The Pacific Ombudsman Alliance (POA) is a professional peer network of Ombudsmen and allied institutions, which grew out of the Pacific Ombudsman Network. The Network was formed by the Pacific Ombudsmen following a meeting in Madang in 2003. The Network, which became the POA in September 2008 received funding from the Australian Aid program from 2004 until June 2016 and from the New Zealand Aid program from 2008 – June 2016. The POA is not itself a creature of funding; it was the Pacific Ombudsmen themselves who chose to come together to develop a support structure, nevertheless, the funding has enabled the Secretariat of the POA to design and deliver support activities that have allowed the members of the POA to develop their strength, confidence and reputation.

The POA has a strong internal governance regime, with a Board and Secretariat. The Secretariat currently sits in the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office (CO) in Australia and utilises the CO's financial and auditing systems. This support has been of great value in enabling the POA to provide flexible support with low administrative costs.

The POA is an innovative and creative organisation that works flexibly to provide support via a range of modalities. Activities include providing on-going professional peer support for Ombudsmen and their staff, working with in-country law and justice programs to ensure complaint and other public accountability mechanisms are considered, developing and delivering targeted training programs using Australian, New Zealand and Pacific trainers, and ensuring corporate systems support strategic organisational goals.



The POA works with initiatives such as PIFS Governance Working Group and the United Nations Pacific Regional Anti-corruption project (UN-PRAC). It also works with other professional organisations, such as the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region (APOR) of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI).

Because the POA is a Pacific peer developed mechanism, it can implement Pacific developed regional solutions to common issues. The direct beneficiaries of POA support are the Ombudsmen and their staff; however, better and more responsive public administration, particularly in those areas that most affect the public, is an outcome of better oversight. Ultimately, the beneficiaries are the citizens of the Pacific, who have their complaints addressed, the concerns resolved and have access to better public services, and more economic opportunities.

In order to be seen as an effective contributor to beating global challenges, the Pacific region must show an on-going commitment to issues of global importance. Governance issues are coming to the fore in a number of global and regional partnerships. For example, the new Secretary-General of the Commonwealth has stated her top priorities are tackling corruption and championing good governance. It is a significant risk to the region's security, economic stability and growth if the Pacific is seen to be lagging in the key area of global economic and democratic governance.

There is little else that operates to support this essential aspect of public administration. International assistance in anti-corruption work tends to focus upon legislation, police and courts or else upon raising awareness through civil society organisations. Internationally and regionally, little consideration has been given to the actual administration of good governance and transparency initiatives. The POA is the only organisation we are aware of that operates specifically to support Ombudsman and allied institutions in the Pacific.

## **5. Why does this initiative require the attention of the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum?**

*Please consider whether this initiative requires the attention and consideration of the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum in order to be implemented and outline why this is the case. Could it not be overseen or implemented at the level of Ministers, officials or by a regional agency?*

*Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.*

Issues relating to public sector reform, service delivery, poor administration and corruption are already claiming much of the attention and consideration of the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum. The Pacific Region is unlikely to meet the Sustainable Development Goals until adequate attention is paid to quality of governance issues. It has been said that governance is the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development; however, good governance can be defined so broadly as to become meaningless. It can imply expensive consultations with international experts, and recommendation for an extensive array of reforms, setting up new government agencies, programs of legislation, new policies and practices.

A more sustainable model of developing and enhancing good governance is to ensure there are effective mechanisms to effectively implement existing laws, policies and procedures, with oversight and enforcement. Pacific Leaders should pay attention to good governance principles and to existing mechanisms that promote better and more open relationships between citizens and the governments. A key part of improving implementation is to build accountability and legitimacy through public scrutiny. It is not democratic if citizens can only express their views through the ballot box.

Pacific Leaders must pay attention not only to the challenges that beset the region, but also to the most effective means of responding to those challenges. Complaints provide essential information to reformers; by giving clear information about where government services are failing and about those areas of failure that are actually making a difference to people's lives. It is impossible to fix everything at once, and complaints data can ensure that scarce resources are directed at those systems that are having the biggest impact upon people's lives.



One key challenge for Pacific Leaders is to ensure that the heads of integrity agencies have the independence they need to fulfil their functions within the governance structure. Ombudsman offices must be free, fair, accessible and independent if they are to work as intended. Pacific Leaders should commit publically to ensuring the independence of integrity agencies and to ensuring that sufficient budgetary support is given to these agencies to allow them to fulfil their legislated functions. In addition to being independent, Pacific Leaders should commit to ensuring that the heads of integrity agencies are capable people with recognised personal integrity.

While independence is crucial, the question that remains is *quis custodiet ipsos custodies* - who guards the guards? Good governance depends upon the integrity of the integrity agencies. The Pacific Ombudsman Alliance is a currently existing operational regional mechanism that provides a professional peer support and integrity framework, and a structure to enable aid funded activities to be effectively and efficiently delivered.

Pacific Leaders need to consider how they will ensure delivery of government services and implementation of their policies. Effective public sector management requires effective oversight; this is done most efficiently by the public themselves reporting on their own encounters with the public service. Integrity agencies are essential, but must be allowed to operate effectively and independently. They therefore require their own regional oversight and professional conduct association – an association that promotes the global standards of Ombudsmen and holds peers to that standard. It is essential that Pacific Leaders take this opportunity to show their support for Ombudsmen and other integrity agencies, while also providing assurance that those agencies are themselves accountable.

We submit that Pacific Leaders should, as a regional priority:

- Ensure all the people of the Pacific have access to an effective complaint handling and dispute resolution scheme (such as an Ombudsman) that covers all aspects of Government administration
- Ensure integrity agencies are run by capable, highly regarded people with strong personal integrity
- Endorse the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance as an effective regional Ombudsman support mechanism

## 6. Attachments

Please attach additional information in support of this initiative.



Microsoft Word  
Document

*Please attach no more than 3 pages.*

## 7. Uploading initiatives to the Forum Secretariat website

In line with the process outlined in the [Framework for Pacific Regionalism](#), all submitted initiatives, inclusive of all attachments, will be publicly available via the Forum Secretariat website.

## 8. Guidelines and Contact Details

For further information on completing this template, consult the submissions guideline below or contact Pacific Regionalism Adviser Joel Nilon at the Forum Secretariat: Email: [FPR@forumsec.org](mailto:FPR@forumsec.org) | Phone: +679 322 0327



## Submission Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to assist those submitting regional initiatives through the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. For more information contact Pacific Regionalism Adviser Joel Nilon at the Forum Secretariat:

Email: [FPR@forumsec.org](mailto:FPR@forumsec.org) | Phone: +679 322 0327

### 1. About the Framework for Pacific Regionalism

The Framework for Pacific Regionalism represents a high-level commitment to pursuing deeper regionalism and establishes a process for developing and prioritising regional public policy. It articulates the vision, values and objectives of an enhanced Pacific regionalism. It also sets out an inclusive process by which anyone can propose ideas for regional initiatives to address key challenges facing the Pacific. For more information, [click here](#).

### 2. How do I submit a regional initiative?

To submit a regional initiative, complete all sections of the submission template and submit to the Forum Secretariat by no later **5pm, Fiji time, Sunday 10 April 2016**.

Submissions must be made on this template. Submissions made directly via email, letter or other format will not be considered.

Delivery of submissions can be made via one of the following



**Email**

[FPR@forumsec.org](mailto:FPR@forumsec.org)



**Post**

Pacific Regionalism Adviser  
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat  
Private Mail Bag  
Suva, Fiji



**Hand Delivery**

Reception  
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat  
Ratu Sukuna Road  
Suva, Fiji



**Fax**

+679 322 0215 Attn: Pacific Regionalism Adviser



### 3. Who can submit an initiative?

Any interested stakeholder can submit a regional initiative. This may include individuals, or groups of individuals or organisations, including government, civil society (including church or religious organisations), the private sector, community groups, multilateral agencies and CROP agencies.

### 4. What information is required?

In completing the regional initiative template, you should:

- a. Identify and seek to respond to issues and challenges that are common to the Pacific region and that could be best addressed through a regional response.
- b. Demonstrate that a high level political decision needs to be made.

**This is not a process for seeking endorsement of existing projects or activities. No standing fund exists in which to allocate funds to initiatives that are endorsed.** Submissions that consist of projects or initiatives that may be ordinarily carried out under the governance arrangements or work-plan of the submitting organisation are unlikely to be successful.

- c. Demonstrate how the initiative would contribute to one or more of the objectives of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

### 5. What assistance will the Forum Secretariat provide through this process

The Forum Secretariat will provide general advice and suggestions to those making submissions. This advice will include clarifying the information set out in this guideline, such as how initiatives can be completed and submitted; the type and level of information sought; the assessment process; and clarification of the overall process.

### 6. Assessment process

- Step 1** The Forum Secretariat will collate all submitted initiatives and check them for completeness.
- Step 2** The Forum Secretariat will, in collaboration with CROP agency officials and other experts as required, conduct a first round of assessment of all submitted initiatives using the tests for regional action (see Table 1 below).
- Step 3** The Forum Secretariat will provide all assessed initiatives to the Specialist Sub-Committee on Regionalism (SSCR), which will assess initiatives against the vision, values and objectives set out in the Framework (see Table 2 below). Reports on current regional initiatives under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism that are in progress will also be considered by the SSCR when they assess initiatives.
- Step 4** Based on its assessment of all submissions, the SSCR may recommend a limited number of initiatives to Forum Leaders. Those initiatives recommended to Leaders will be first sent to the Forum Officials Committee for commentary and incorporation on the Leaders' annual meeting agenda. Forum Leaders



will then receive the final recommendations of the SSCR and make decisions on these at the annual Forum Leaders Meeting. In 2016 this meeting will take place in the Federated States of Micronesia

Proponents whose initiatives have been selected for Leaders' consideration will be informed of this selection within two weeks of the SSCR's decision. All proponents will be informed in due course of the outcome of their submissions.

## **7. Leaders' decisions on initiatives**

Forum Leaders' decisions on initiatives will be publicly announced through the Forum Leaders' Communique that is issued at the conclusion of the Leaders' meeting. As directed by Leaders, the Forum Secretariat will initiate implementation of the decisions in consultation with the proponent, the proposed implementing agencies, funding partners, and other relevant organisations or stakeholders.

## **8. Further help and feedback**

For further information or guidance or to provide feedback on the process, contact Pacific Regionalism Adviser Joel Nilon at the Forum Secretariat: Email: [FPR@forumsec.org](mailto:FPR@forumsec.org) | Phone: +679 322 0327



**Table 1 – Tests for Regionalism**

<b>TEST</b>	<b>CRITERIA FOR REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>Market test</b>	The initiative should not involve a service that markets can provide well.
<b>Sovereignty test</b>	The initiative should maintain the degree of effective sovereignty held by national governments (countries, not regional bodies, should decide priorities).
<b>Regionalism test</b>	<p>The initiative should meet one of the following criteria at a sub-regional or regional level, in support of national priorities and objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ establish a shared norm or standard</li><li>▪ establish a common position on an issue</li><li>▪ deliver a public or quasi-public good which is regional (or sub-regional) in its scope realise economies of scale</li><li>▪ overcome national capacity constraints</li><li>▪ complement national governments where they lack capacity to provide national public goods like security or the rule of law</li><li>▪ facilitate economic or political integration</li><li>▪ Where benefits accrue sub-regionally, the contribution to broader regionalism should be clear.</li></ul>
<b>Benefit test</b>	<p>The initiative should bring substantial net benefits, as demonstrated by a cost-benefit analysis. The distribution of benefits across countries and across stakeholders within the region should also be considered—particularly with respect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The relative costs and benefits for smaller island states (an “SIS test”)</li><li>▪ How inclusive the proposal is of all stakeholders who might benefit from regionalism.</li></ul>
<b>Political oversight test</b>	The initiative should require the Leaders’ attention and input (as opposed to being within the mandate of Ministers or other governing bodies).
<b>Risk and sustainability test</b>	The initiative should demonstrate a robust risk and sustainability evaluation, be based on a sound implementation plan, be supported by some identified funding, and demonstrate available capacity and experience for successful implementation.
<b>Duplication test</b>	The initiative should not be currently under progress by another organisation or process, and there should be no duplication of effort.



**Table 2 – Vision, Values and Objectives of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism**

**Vision:**

Our Pacific Vision is for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives

**Values:**

- We value and depend upon the integrity of our vast ocean and our island resources.
- We treasure the diversity and heritage of the Pacific and seek an inclusive future in which cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed.
- We embrace good governance, the full observance of democratic values, the rule of law, the defence and promotion of all human rights, gender equality, and commitment to just societies.
- We seek peaceful, safe, and stable communities and countries, ensuring full security and wellbeing for the peoples of the Pacific.
- We support full inclusivity, equity and equality for all people of the Pacific.
- We strive for effective, open and honest relationships and inclusive and enduring partnerships—based on mutual accountability and respect—with each other, within our sub-regions, within our region, and beyond.

These Pacific regional values will guide all our policy-making and implementation.

**Principal Objectives:**

- Sustainable development that combines economic social, and cultural development in ways that improve livelihoods and well-being and use the environment sustainably;
- Economic growth that is inclusive and equitable;
- Strengthened governance, legal, financial, and administrative systems; and
- Security that ensures stable and safe human, environmental and political conditions for all.