Express Communication on Progress (COP) for Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a COP?

The COP is an annual, public disclosure to stakeholders on progress made toward implementing the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact, and supporting broader UN goals and issues. The COP serves to enhance transparency and accountability, drive continuous performance improvement, and provide a repository of corporate practices to promote dialogue and learning.

What is an express COP?

It is a way for SMEs who participate in the UN Global Compact to fulfill their commitment to communicate progress annually, simply by clicking on the answers to three questions regarding their sustainability practices. An express COP does not require a participant to upload additional documentation or to type content during the submission.

Is the express COP available only for SMEs?

Yes. The express COP is intended only for SMEs with less than 250 employees who participate in the UN Global Compact. It is designed especially for companies who do not do regular reporting and do not have resources to dedicate to writing a COP. Companies with regular reporting practices can continue to use the established COP submission process.

When can SMEs start submitting express COPs?

Starting on 1 April 2016, SMEs in the UN Global Compact may choose to submit an express COP. SMEs who do not want to use the express COP can continue to write their COP and submit it (A) in PDF format by uploading the file, or (B) using the basic template provided by the UN Global Compact.

What are the questions in an express COP?

SMEs choosing to submit an express COP must answer the following questions that correspond with the three minimum COP requirements. During the submission process, they will appear similar to the following image:

Communication on Progress

General Information

Submit your COP

Does your company's highest executive support and endorse the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact?

- ● Yes
- ○ No

Did your company take any actions in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption?

- ● Yes
- ○ No

Did your company monitor the outcomes of such activities?

- ● Yes
- ○ No

Why an express COP?

The express COP is tailored to the unique challenges, capacities, resources, and operating conditions of many SMEs in the UN Global Compact. It enables them to exhibit transparency within their means, and focus on continuously improving their reporting. The express COP is a direct result of analysis done by the UN Global Compact and its Local Networks on how to best engage SME participants, in part by simplifying the reporting process for them.

Must all SMEs use the express COP?

No. The express COP is an option offered to SMEs who want to remain active in the UN Global Compact but who do not have the resources to create and submit a regular COP. SMEs who do not want to use the express COP can write their COP and submit it (A) in PDF format by uploading the file, or (B) using the basic template provided by the UN Global Compact. In all cases, the only way to submit the COP is for the participant to log in at www.unglobalcompact.org. Best practice in reporting is to communicate relevant information on progress made as completely and transparently as possible; hence, the UN Global Compact highly encourages SMEs to develop their COPs and submit them in PDF format (option A above) whenever practical.

Can companies who are not SMEs submit an express COP?

No. The express COP is only an option for companies with less than 250 employees.

Are there different levels of express COPs?

Yes. Express COPs are classified as follows:

- GC Active: Those that answer "yes" to all three questions
- GC Learner: Those that answer "no" to one or more of the three questions

Should an SME submit an express or a regular COP?

The UN Global Compact highly encourages SMEs to develop their COPs and submit them in PDF format through the established COP submission process whenever practical. This is in line with best practice of communicating relevant sustainability information as completely and transparently as possible. However, if the SME is not in a position to develop a report, it should take advantage of the express COP option to continue to benefit from being a UN Global Compact participant.

How long does it take to submit an express COP?

If the person submitting the express COP knows the answers to the three questions, it can take approximately 3 minutes.

In what languages is the express COP available?

When an SME logs in to submit an express COP, it can choose to have the online form translated via Google Translate into more than 100 languages. See list here.

What is the deadline to submit an express COP?

Express COPs follow the same deadline protocol as regular COPs. Participants must submit the first COP within one year from the date of joining the UN Global Compact. All subsequent COPs are due within one year following the previous submission. The upcoming deadline is listed on the participant's profile at www.unglobalcompact.org. The participant is designated as "non-communicating" if it fails to submit a COP within the required deadline. A non-communicating participant that fails to submit a COP within a year of being labeled as such, will be expelled from the UN Global Compact.

In case of a foreseeable delay in COP submission, participants may request a grace period of 90 days from the COP deadline by logging in at www.unglobalcompact.org and submitting a grace letter, providing a reasonable explanation for the delay and stating the date by which the COP will be submitted. Any grace period granted will reset the COP deadline (e.g., if the original COP deadline is 1 January 2017 and the grace period ends 1 April 2017, then the next COP deadline will be 1 April 2018).

Where does an SME submit an express COP?

The only way to submit an express COP is for the participant to log in at https://www.unglobalcompact.org and select the express COP option.

What files does an SME need to upload for an express COP?

When submitting an express COP, it is not necessary to upload any files, nor must you write anything. Answer the three questions, click submit, and you're done. SMEs who wish to upload a document as part of their COP must proceed with a regular COP submission in PDF format by uploading the file. SMEs who wish to fill in their written responses online must use the basic template provided by the UN Global Compact.

Once an SME starts to complete an express COP, can it save it?

No. Once an SME starts to complete an express COP, it must answer all three questions and submit it at one time.

Are express COPs visible to the public?

Yes. Immediately upon submission they are displayed in the participant's profile at https://www.unglobalcompact.org.

Is there a limit to the number of express COPs an SME can submit?

No. An SME may submit an express COP every year if it chooses. However, best practice in reporting is to communicate relevant information on progress made as completely and transparently as possible; hence, the UN Global Compact highly encourages SMEs to develop their COPs and submit them in PDF format whenever practical.

Where can SMEs get more guidance on the express COP?

Please start by listening to the recorded webinar "Introducing the Express COP for SMEs." For further support, contact the Global Compact in your country via our Local Networks.