

GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM



BARBADOS
MARINE SPATIAL PLAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) has been prepared for the Barbados Marine Spatial Plan (BMSP), which is being implemented by the Marine Spatial Planning Unit (MSPU) of the Coastal Zone Management Unit (CZMU), a division of the Ministry of Environment and National Beautification, Green and Blue Economy. The purpose of this GRM is to provide procedures to guide the way in which complaints and concerns from stakeholders will be handled.

Policies and plans have the potential to impact a range of stakeholders, and as such they may have grievances as the process unfolds. During the life cycle of any project, people adversely affected, or that have the potential to be affected, may have concerns about actual or perceived impacts. **A grievance is an issue, concern, problem, or claim (perceived or actual) that an individual or group wants to have addressed and resolved**¹. A GRM is a locally based, formalized way to accept, assess, and resolve community feedback or complaints.² They are the formal systems developed through which stakeholders can highlight grievances that arise relating to the design, implementation, or assessment of policies, to seek recourse. This mechanism will ensure that stakeholders who may be adversely affected by the project decisions especially during plan development and implementation, can communicate their valid issues and receive appropriate redress.

GRMs help to facilitate the timely identification and treatment of potential emerging risks, while also giving a voice to the marginalized and building trust and mutual respect between authorities and stakeholders. They provide predictable, transparent, and credible processes for all parties, resulting in outcomes that are seen as fair, effective and lasting.³

¹ IACT, Stakeholder Participation Guide, April 2020 <https://climateactiontransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Stakeholder-Participation-Assessment-Guide.pdf>

² Office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman for the International Finance Corporation (CAO). 2008. Advisory Note: A Guide to Designing and Implementing Grievance Mechanisms for Development Projects, Washington, D.C.

³ Ibid.

Benefits of GRM

Benefits to the Project Management Team	Benefits to Stakeholders
Provides a local/community-based method to resolve concerns before they escalate into major project risks.	Provides a clear method to report grievances.
Helps to build trust and credibility of the project management team once grievances are addressed in a fair and timely manner.	Establishes a structured process for the resolution of grievances including a fair hearing if necessary.
Facilitates effective communication between the project management team and stakeholders.	Provides the opportunity to influence the decision-making process.
Helps to avoid delays and project increases.	Facilitates access to information.

Table 1: Table showing the benefits of utilizing the grievance redress process to project managers and stakeholders.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE BMSP GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM

For the Barbados Marine Spatial Plan, a non-judicial GRM is being used, which is broad in scope to handle a range of complaints relating directly to the marine spatial planning (MSP) process. Complaints received which fall outside of this scope, will be referred to the relevant entities for redress. This GRM aims to:

- Provide an accessible process to receive grievances and concerns from those affected by the design or implementation of the BMSP.
- Provide procedures to guide the MSPU in resolving complaints comments, questions, concerns, and suggestions from stakeholders related to the project and its activities in a fair, transparent, and practical manner.
- Identify and manage stakeholder concerns and thus support effective risk management for the project.
- Facilitate effective communication between the MSPU and stakeholders, to build and maintain trust.
- Prevent adverse consequences of failure to adequately address grievances.

3. GRM PROCEDURES

The Criteria for Grievances/Complaints

To implement a GRM, it is important to understand what constitutes a grievance within the context of this process.

“A grievance is an expression of concern or complaint voiced by any person who feels they have been or will be negatively impacted by someone else’s activities. It often marks the beginning of a dispute between them.” (World Bank)

There is an important distinction to be made between “feedback” and “grievances”. A stakeholder who provides feedback does not expect a specific response or resolution. In contrast, for a grievance, the complainant seeks a direct response or redress to their specific concern. Feedback that is not effectively dealt with may escalate into a grievance.

Eligible Grievances

To be eligible for a GRM response, the complaint must directly pertain to the BMSP and its activities. The complainant must:

- a) Indicate how the BMSP have caused or contributed to social, economic, or environmental harm.
- b) Be an individual or group who could plausibly be affected by the harm referenced in the complaint.

Ineligible Grievances

- Complaints with respect to actions or omissions that are not technically or financially supported by the MSP process, or about parties that are not partners or collaborating partners in the MSP process.
- Complaints about issues outside of the MSP scope.
- Complaints that relate to the laws, policies, and regulations of Barbados.
- Complaints submitted by the same claimant on matters they submitted to the GRM earlier, unless new evidence is provided, or the MSPU has not responded to this complaint prior.

Receiving Grievances

Complaints can be disclosed at any time during the development or implementation of the BMSP. Four main channels for officially receiving grievances have been established, which are:

- I. A dedicated phone number with voice calls and WhatsApp facility: (246) 256-3181
- II. A dedicated email address: info@barbadosmarinespatialplan.com
- III. A digital grievance submission form on the BMSP website and on social media <https://forms.gle/BVWY5yThS8vYfDDw7>
- IV. Face to face interactions with members of the MSPU, supported by the digital grievance submission form.

Responding to and Resolving Complaints

Once a grievance is submitted, complainants will receive an acknowledgement of their complaint shortly after receipt. A further tailored response to the complaint will be given as soon as possible, regardless of whether a decision has been reached. This second response will fall under one of either three categories:

- I. **The complaint is upheld**, and the complainant is advised what action will be taken in resolution.
- II. **The complaint is not upheld**, and the complainant is informed of this with the rationale supporting this decision as well as their right to appeal.
- III. **A decision has not been made**, and the complainant is provided with an update as to the status of their grievance.

Once the eligibility of the complaint to be addressed by the MSPU's GRM has been determined, an independent, objective and impartial review of the information submitted will be done by the Project Manager and Deputy Project Manager. Where a conflict of interest arises, the matter should be referred to the Project Steering Committee. All decisions will be communicated to the complainant along with information on how to appeal the decision through the Project Steering Committee for redress.

Anonymity, Confidentiality, and conflict of interest

Complainants may request and receive anonymity and the MSPU as the entity facilitating the GRM is obligated to guarantee assessment and response for all eligible cases regardless of anonymity. However, the GRM cannot directly respond to anonymous grievances. Whether the grievance has been submitted anonymously or not, all grievances will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality, barring the involvement of external agencies needed to assist in the resolution. The Project Steering Committee will also receive an incremental report of grievances received and resolved within an agreed period. Finally, where a conflict of interest arises between the complainant and the MSPU, the case will be referred to the Project Steering Committee.