


# Frequently Asked Questions

BY BANK STAFF ABOUT  
THE INSPECTION PANEL



"The presence of the Inspection Panel in the World Bank is a testament to our basic values. Being accountable and delivering results to the people we serve is at the core of our most fundamental commitments."

**Jim Yong Kim**

*World Bank Group President*

## **What does the Panel do?**

The Panel responds to complaints (Requests for Inspections) from people who believe they have been, or will be, harmed as a result of a Bank-supported project. In certain cases the Panel carries out a compliance review (investigation); in other cases the concerns of the Requesters may be addressed without an investigation. The Panel's work contributes to the World Bank's efforts in ensuring that Bank-supported projects benefit the people for whom they are intended.

## **What kind of projects does the Panel review?**

The Panel considers Requests pertaining to any IBRD/IDA project or program approved by the Executive Directors or under consideration by Bank Management. Requests may relate to, but are not limited to: projects financed by an investment loan, credit, or trust fund (e.g., Global Environmental Facility); programs funded through development policy lending; projects and programs co-financed with other international financial institutions; and Program for Results operations.

## **What kind of policies and procedures does the Panel consider?**

The Panel considers all World Bank Operational Policies and Procedures, including safeguards policies, applicable to the design, appraisal, and implementation of a Bank-supported project. The Panel does not review Guidelines, Best Practices, and similar documents or statements; procurement-related issues; or fraud and corruption. Concerns regarding fraud and corruption should be reported to the Integrity Vice Presidency.

## **How does the Panel determine which Requests can be registered?**

Within 15 days of receiving a Request, the Panel determines its admissibility using clearly defined criteria set forth in the Panel's Operating Procedures (the updated Operating Procedures were approved in April 2014 and can be found on the Panel website). Admissibility criteria include the following: the request is not frivolous, absurd, or anonymous; it relates to a Bank-supported project that is not closed or 95 percent disbursed; it does not concern procurement issues; and the Panel has not made a previous recommendation on the subject matter, and no new evidence has been presented. Another important criterion is that the subject matter of the Request should have been brought to Management's attention prior to approaching the Panel, and Management should have been given a reasonable opportunity to address the issues of concern.

## **Is there an opportunity for early resolution of complaints before registration?**

Yes. Prior to registration, if the Panel assesses that the concerns raised are clearly defined, focused, and limited in scope, then the Panel can explore options for early resolution of complaints with Management and Requesters. If all parties agree, then Management proposes steps (culminating with an Action Plan) to address the harm. This is a new approach that is being implemented on a pilot basis as a result of feedback on the Panel's Operating Procedures. The success of the approach will be assessed by the end of 2015.

Q & A

## **How does the Panel determine if an investigation is warranted?**

After reviewing the Management Response to a Request, the Panel determines whether the Request should be investigated. In addition to the technical eligibility criteria, the Panel will take into account additional information. This includes:

- Whether a plausible link between alleged harm and the project exists
- Whether harm and possible noncompliance may be of a serious nature
- Whether Management has dealt appropriately with issues raised, and demonstrated it has followed policies and procedures, or acknowledged that it did not comply with policies and procedures
- Whether Management provided a statement of remedial action, and whether this may be adequate

## **How does the Panel carry out an investigation?**

When an investigation is approved by the Board, the Panel prepares an Investigation Plan that outlines the scope of an investigation, key issues to be addressed, and a timeline. The Panel posts this plan on its website within four to six weeks of the Board approval. The investigation includes a review of all Bank and related project documents, interviews with Bank staff and consultants, a visit to the borrower



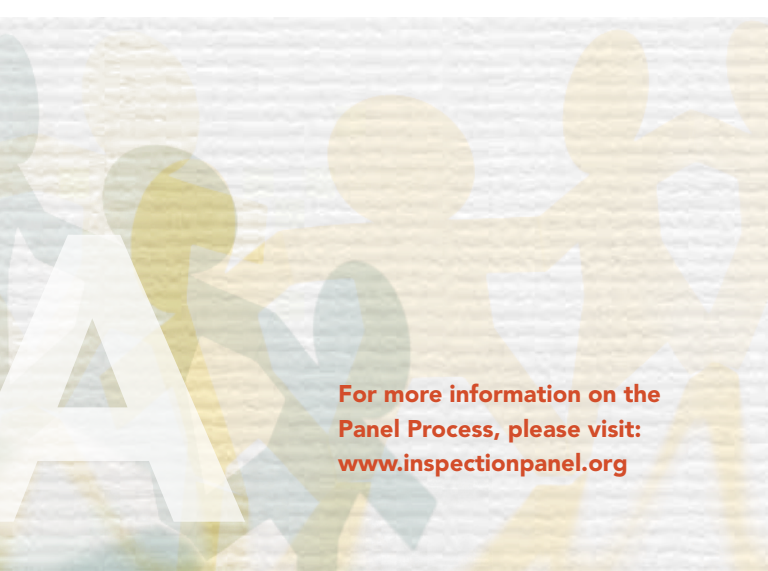
country and project site, and meetings with Requesters. The Panel usually hires experts to assist in the investigation. The Panel seeks to complete its investigation within six months of the posting of the Investigation Plan. During this process, the Panel maintains regular interaction with the Requesters, Management, and the borrower (through the relevant Executive Director).

### **How are staff interviews conducted?**

During an investigation, the Panel meets individually with staff and consultants who are, or were, involved with the project under review. Interviews are one aspect of the Panel's fact-finding activities during the investigation, and they contribute to gaining an in-depth understanding of the project, its context, and the issues raised by the Requesters. Their purpose is not to assign fault to any individual Bank staff member. The Panel does not record interviews; rather, interviewers take notes.

### **What kind of information can the Panel access?**

The Panel may examine any of the Bank's pertinent project records or documents during an investigation. Staff names associated with these sources, however, are not disclosed in the Panel's reports. The Panel does not have access to or examine staff personal records. The Panel operates by the same confidentiality rules as the rest of the Bank.



**For more information on the  
Panel Process, please visit:  
[www.inspectionpanel.org](http://www.inspectionpanel.org)**

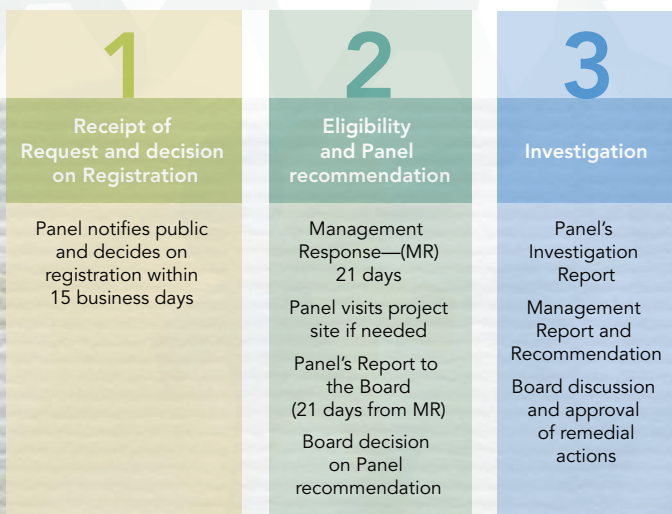
## What are some of the benefits of an investigation?

When the Panel finds noncompliance and related harm during an investigation, the Management's action plan, in response to the Panel's findings, includes corrective actions that address the Requesters' concerns. The Panel's investigations offer valuable lessons for the World Bank, especially with regards to environmental and social issues. The Panel has shared these lessons in various ways, through brown bag lunches, meetings with Management and the World Bank Board of Directors, and events at the World Bank Spring and Annual Meetings.

## Can a request for investigation result in the suspension of a project?

No. The Panel cannot suspend or stop projects at any time. Management or the Board can decide whether or not to suspend a project.

### THE 4 PHASES OF THE INSPECTION PANEL PROCESS



## How does the Panel ensure transparency of the Panel process?

Transparency is of paramount importance to the Panel's work and the Panel takes serious steps to ensure timely disclosure and the availability of information. The Panel records the date of receipt of a Request for Inspection on the Panel website to ensure that the information is available to all stakeholders. Other key documents pertaining to the Panel process, such as Requests for Inspection, Management Responses, Eligibility Reports, and Investigation Reports, are disclosed on the Panel website in accordance with the Panel's disclosure provisions. At the end of the investigation process, a press release summarizing the outcome of the Board meeting is issued and made public.

## Does the Panel have any contact with the borrower implementing the project?

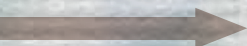
The Panel has regular meetings with the Executive Director representing the borrower country during the Panel process to seek views and inputs that may be important to the Panel's work. The Panel meets and consults with representatives of the borrower government during its visits to the country. The Panel makes it clear during these visits that the Panel does not investigate the borrower.

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### Post Investigation

Panel return visit  
to project site,  
if needed

Action Plan  
implementation  
by Management



## The Inspection Panel

The World Bank Inspection Panel was created in 1993 by the Board of Executive Directors to serve two accountability functions: to provide recourse for people who may be impacted by a Bank-financed project; and to serve as a checks-and-balances mechanism for the Board, which enhances the Bank's credibility for external stakeholders. The Panel reports directly to the Board and is composed of three members of different nationalities, who serve non-renewable five-year terms, and a Secretariat that supports the Panel.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

#### The Inspection Panel

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