



**SAHARA
AND SAHEL
OBSERVATORY**

COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

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ACRONYMS

IDC	Information Dissemination Committee
CID	Communication and Information Division
WPD	Watch and Prospective Department
IDG	Information Dissemination Guide
GCGHU	Governance Compliance and Grievance Handling Unit
IT	Investigation Team
MRT	Monitoring and Reporting Team
RVC	Review and Validation Committee

DEFINITIONS^{1,2,3}

Information Dissemination Committee (IDC): A body that is part of the Mechanism of Appeal in case of denial or omission to disseminate information.

Communication: The act of transferring information or knowledge to others. It also determines the set of techniques and means by which an organization presents its products, services, and activities. The communication chain includes a transmitter (sender), a receiver (recipient), a message, a code such as language, a transmission channel such as voice, telephone, etc., and a context.

Counterpart: Any individual, organization, institution, or any other entity involved in the OSS activities.

Information: News, piece of information, or documentation about something or someone that is being brought to the attention of others.

Media: Means, techniques and media for mass information dissemination such as the press, radio, television, cinema, etc.

Technical and Financial Partners: Partners who work or collaborate with OSS in its various areas of activity, in both technical and financial terms.

Governance Compliance and Grievance Handling Unit (GCGHU): An independent body within the OSS that directly reports to the Executive Secretary. It is responsible for ensuring compliance with governance principles and regulations. GCGHU oversees the implementation of the OSS policies and procedures and handles complaints or grievances raised by stakeholders, partners or any person or entity working with the OSS or involved in its activities. GCGHU plays a crucial role in promoting transparency, accountability and ethical conduct, while effectively managing and resolving complaints or disputes that may arise within the OSS.

Monitoring and Reporting Team (MRT): A subdivision of the GCGHU responsible for ensuring the validity of the OSS denial or omission of information dissemination, which has been the subject of a complaint. MRT then reports its findings to the relevant OSS body.

Investigation Team (IT): A subdivision of the UCGTP, responsible for conducting investigations in conjunction with the relevant OSS body.

Review and Validation Committee (RVC): A body that is part of the OSS. It is responsible for the quality of the information it disseminates.

¹ https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/C.40.08_Branding_the_GEF_final_0.pdf

² <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gcf-b20-14.pdf>

³ <http://www.oss-online.org/fr/gouvernance>

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The Communication Procedures (hereinafter referred to as the "Procedures" or "CP") are developed by the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (hereinafter referred to as the "OSS"). Since 2017, the OSS has developed a process for disseminating information. Its principles have been incorporated into these Communication Procedures. Its objective is to implement the principles and rules for information dissemination, while promoting good governance and transparency in the fulfillment of its mission.

The Communication Procedures define the *modus operandi*, the different actors, and the relevant steps, in order to ensure public access to information and stakeholder participation in the fulfillment of the OSS mission. This information is made available to the public either as standard practice or as requested.

The OSS procedures also set out how stakeholders and the general public are to formulate their feedbacks in case of disruption in access to information and/or dissemination.

The Sahara and Sahel Observatory is also committed to achieving the objectives set out in its Communication Policy, specifically to:

- Increase visibility by communicating about its mission, strategies, activities, projects, programs, and initiatives in a way that reflects its identity;
- Build partner loyalty through regular communications about its latest news;
- Position itself in Africa as one of the major players in the fields it works on: Water, Land, Climate and Biodiversity;
- Strengthen the dissemination of information while minimizing the exclusion list, in order to evidence its willingness to make the information it holds publicly available;
- Enhance accessibility to information for a broader range of stakeholders at the regional, national, and local levels;
- Support its advisory process by involving all relevant stakeholders in its projects and programs development and implementation, especially beneficiaries including indigenous peoples and marginalized groups;
- Enhance the Governance Compliance and Grievance Handling Unit (GCGHU) role, to better manage complaints;
- Promote good governance, transparency, and accountability;
- Leverage best practices and lessons learned;
- Improve the production, storage, coordination, and information dissemination process;
- Contribute to harmonize with development organizations pursuing like-minded missions.

2. AREAS OF APPLICATION

With regard to its Articles, the OSS is an international organization whose mission is to act as an instrument of liaison and as a framework for partnership and consultation in its



various areas of activity. As such, the OSS is committed to communicating about its activities both with its partners and with the general public. These Communication Procedures (CP) that OSS is using show how it implements its strategy in the following areas:

- Courtesy visits organized by the OSS to authorities of different levels, in various countries where it works;
- Organizing and attending events, including those where OSS is invited;
- Development of projects and programs which are generally carried out in accordance with the requirements of the technical and financial partners. This procedure ensures that all relevant stakeholders are involved and that their needs and concerns are considered in developing projects and programs;
- Implementing projects and programs that follow a process similar to the previous one, but that also involve the beneficiaries who are assured that their needs will be met and their concerns will be addressed. The implementation of infrastructure and other projects and programs is highlighted in this context.

3. COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

The Communication Procedures include three main components: I) Stages of Information Dissemination; II) Information Dissemination at the Request of Third Parties; and III) Resolution of Complaints and Grievances Related to Disseminating Information (The Mechanism of Appeal). An Information Dissemination Guide (IDG) will be made available to affiliates and counterparties, as part of the Communications Policy to promote best practices for systematic and timely dissemination.

3.1. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION PROCEDURE

The OSS has access to a comprehensive range of information sorted into three categories in

Category A refers to information of public interest that is intended for general distribution. It is shared on social networks and the OSS website. This category includes informational documents in relation with OSS policies, procedures, and governance; project and activity updates; and generated knowledge products as part of its activities.

Category B refers to confidential information identified in the "Limited Exclusion List" of the Communications Policy. Disclosure of this kind of information is strictly prohibited under any circumstances.

Category C refers to information dissemination on condition according to the criteria established by the Information Dissemination Committee (IDC).

accordance with their level of accessibility.

Stages of information dissemination

Information dissemination follows a clear procedure that ensures transparency for both the direct and indirect audience of the OSS.

- 1) The Communication and Information Division (CID) is the focal point for the information it receives. This includes, but is not limited to, mission reports and final project reports;
- 2) The CID generates user-friendly information. It is supported in some cases by the Watch and Prospective Department (WPD);
- 3) The Review and Validation Committee (RVC) reviews and validates the information once it is ready;
- 4) After validation, the CID identifies the target audience, selects the distribution channels, and plans the dissemination of the information that has been processed;
- 5) The OSS disseminates information through its website and social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. It also distributes hard copies at events it attends. After dissemination, the CID will follow up the feedbacks received on the disseminated information and makes necessary improvements.
- 6) Information is classified and archived at the end of these stages.

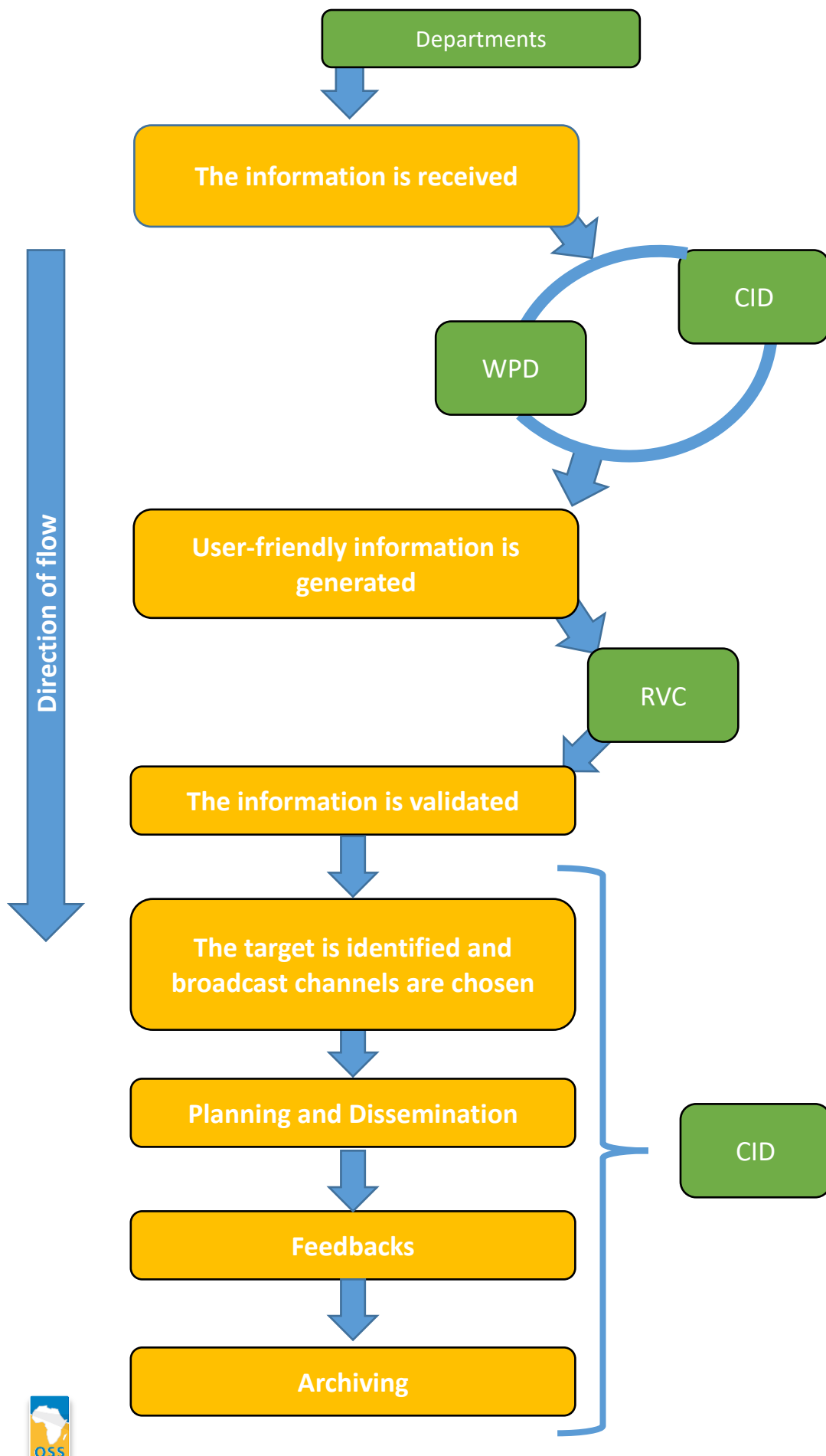
Information Dissemination Flowchart

Table of Information Dissemination

What?	How?	Who?
Step 1 – Receiving information	The departments send raw information to ICD and WPD.	Departments, CID, WPD,
Step 2 – User-friendly information generation	The received information is processed.	ICD, WPD
Step 3 – Validation of Information	The information is sent to the RVC which reviews and validates it before it is broadcast, to ensure its accuracy and relevance. Corrections will be made, if needed.	RVC
Step 4 – Target identification and channel selection	The target audience is identified and the communication channels to use are chosen (e-mails, meetings, websites, social networks, etc.).	CID
Step 5 – Planning and Dissemination	Based on the importance and urgency of the information, a schedule is established for disseminating the information.	CID
Step 6 – Feedbacks	After the information is broadcast, audience feedback is tracked to ensure that the information was properly understood.	CID, audience
Step 7 – Archiving	Information is classified and archived.	CID Archives Manager

3.2. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION PROCEDURE AT THE REQUEST OF THIRD PARTIES

The OSS has a large audience that includes a range of stakeholders such as scientists, representatives of national authorities, financial and institutional partners, experts, etc. These stakeholders have the right to request information that is not available on the OSS web site and/or on the social networking sites.

To ensure transparency and equitable handling of requests, the OSS will implement an information-gathering process to guide partners.

1) Any request for information should be addressed to the Information Dissemination Committee (IDC) in person or through the following channels:

Email:	cdi@oss.org.tn
Telephone:	+216 71 206 633/634
Mailing Address:	Information Dissemination Committee Sahara and Sahel Observatory BP 31. Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat. Tunis 1080 Republic of Tunisia

2) The CID will acknowledge receipt of the request within three (3) business days and will process it within five (5) business days.

3) The CID processes the request and determines the category of information of interest as follows:

- If the request falls under Category A (Information for the public), the CID will accept it and direct the requester to the Communication and Information Division (CID) for collection;
- If the request falls under Category B (Confidential Information), the CID will deny the request in order to maintain the confidentiality that safeguards the relationship with the counterparties and ensures the efficient functioning of the OSS. The applicant is notified of the decision by e-mail;
- If the request falls under Category C (Information dissemination on condition), the CID will make recommendations to take into account in the final decision and will seek the opinion of the person who is directly involved with the information. All recommendations are then forwarded to the Executive Secretary (ES), who will make the final decision. The decision is e-mailed to the applicant and then archived;

4) In the event of denial or omission, the applicant reserves the right to file a complaint through the Mechanism of Appeal established by the OSS.

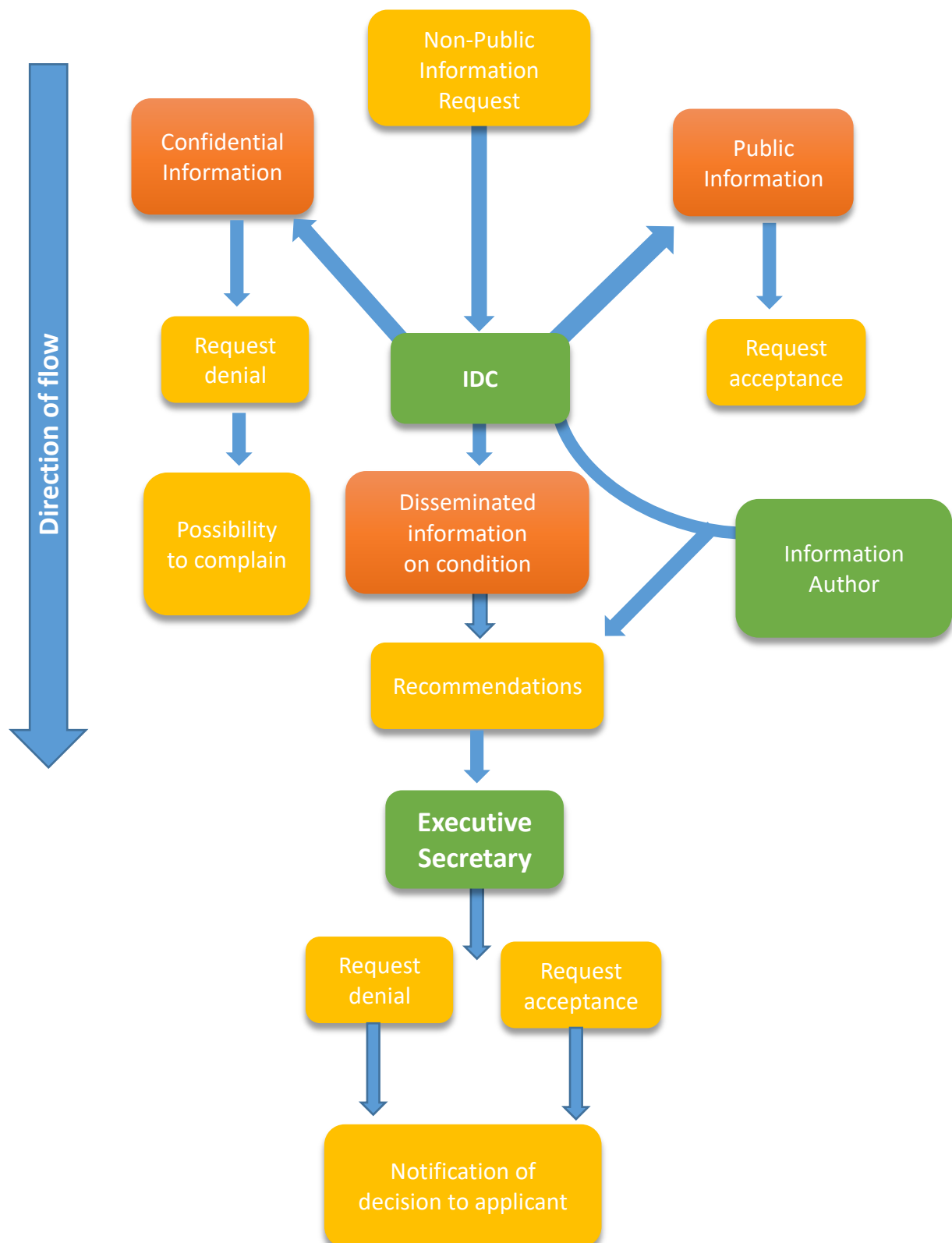
Flowchart of Information Dissemination at the request of third parties

Table of Information Dissemination at the request of third parties

What?	How?	Who?
Step 1 – Delivery of request	The request is addressed to the Information Dissemination Committee (IDC) in person or through communication channels (email, mailing address, toll-free number, etc.).	Applicant
Step 2 – Request reception and processing	The request is processed and the information category is determined.	ICD
Step 3 – In case of public information	The request is accepted and the applicant is directed to the ICD	IDC, CID
Step 4 – In case of Confidential Information	The request is denied. The Applicant is notified of the decision.	IDC, applicant
Step 5 – In case of Information to disseminate on condition	The IDC prepares the recommendations in conjunction with the author of the information. They are then sent to the ES for the final decision.	IDC, author, ES
Step 6 – Archiving request reports	Request reports are classified then archived.	IDC
Step 7 – Complaint can be filed in case of denial or omission	The applicant can file a complaint with the Mechanism of Appeal established by the OSS.	Applicant, IDC, GCGHU

3.3. MECHANISM OF APPEAL

The Communication Procedures include an "Mechanism of Appel" in the event that complainants report the denial or failure of the OSS to disseminate information.

To this end, the Mechanism of Appeal provides for two bodies: the Governance Compliance and Grievance Handling Unit (GCGHU) and the Information Dissemination Committee (IDC). Their task is to address as follows, the disruptions that have led to complaints:

- The GCGHU receives the complaints and checks their validity prior to submit them to the IDC.
- The IDC reviews and processes the legitimate appeals of non-dissemination or denial of information that is deemed "eligible" to disseminate.

The Review and Validation Committee (RVC) is responsible for evaluating the documents developed by these bodies prior to final dissemination of the information.

Anyone reporting such malfunctions of the information dissemination will be protected in accordance with the Whistleblowers and Witnesses Protection Policy of the OSS.

Setting up and running the Mechanism of Appeal

- 1) Any case of information dissemination denial or omission observed at the OSS must be addressed in person to the Governance Compliance and Grievance Handling Unit (GCGHU) or through the following channels:

Email:	gcghu@oss.org.tn
Phone:	+216 71 206 633/634
Mailing address:	Governance Compliance and Grievance Handling Unit Sahara and Sahel Observatory BP 31. Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat. Tunis 1080 Republic of Tunisia

- 2) GCGHU will acknowledge receipt of the request within three (3) business days and will process it within five (5) business days. Once received, the complaint will first be processed by the Monitoring and Reporting Team (MRT) of the GCGHU, which will decide on its validity.
- 3) In case the complaint is deemed invalid, the case will be closed and the whistleblower will be notified of such decision.
- 4) In case the complaint is found to have merit, the Investigation Team (IT) will initiate an investigation in conjunction with the IDC and present its findings to the GCGHU and the ES.
- 5) The ES will make the final decision, which will be forwarded to the whistleblower and then archived.

Flowchart of the Mechanism of Appeal

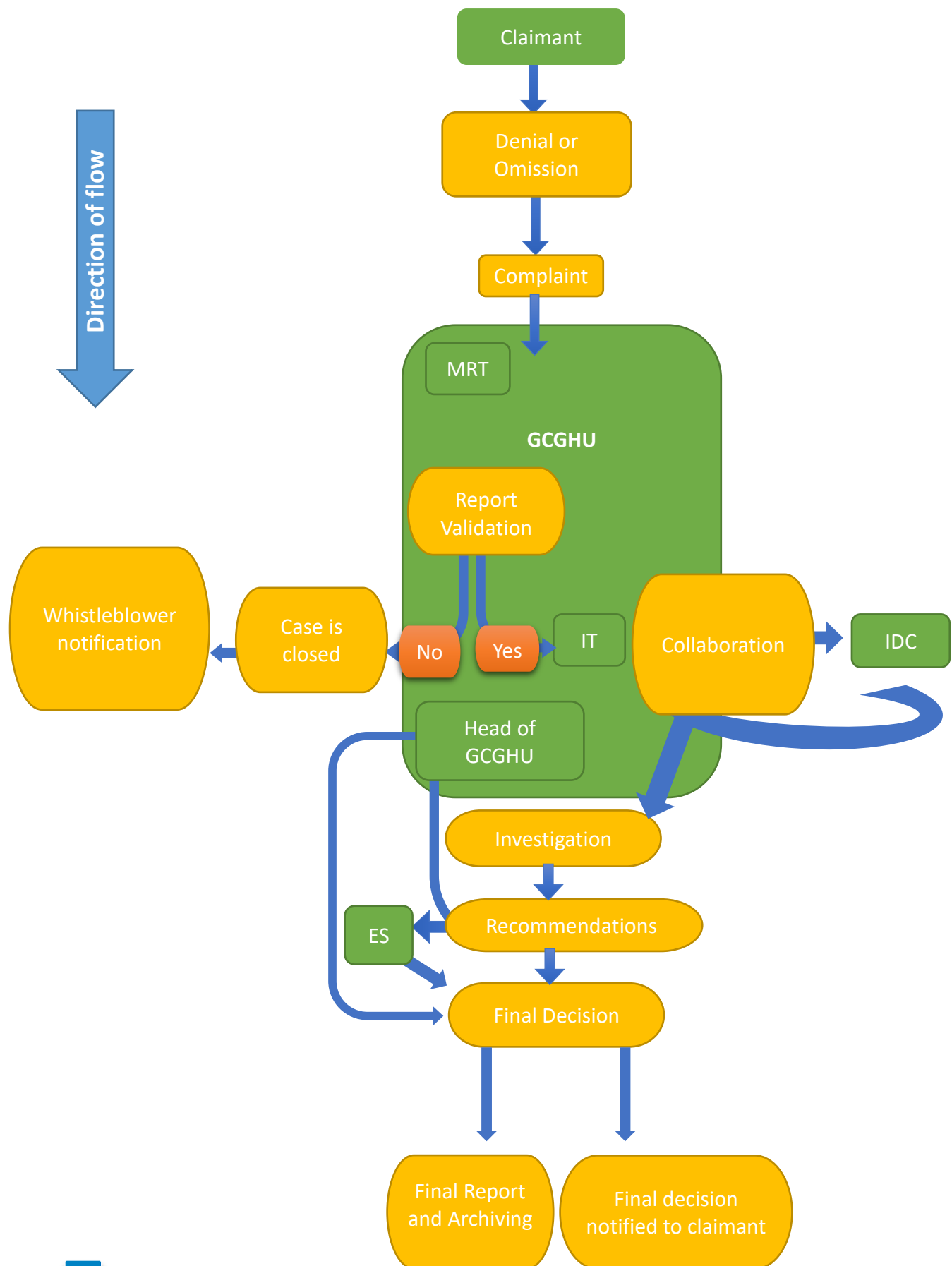


Table of the Mechanism of Appeal Procedure

What?	How?	Who?
Step 1 – Denial or Omission Reporting	Complaint addressed in person or via e-mail, mailing address, toll-free number, etc.	Whistleblower
Step 2 – Receipt and Validation of Complaint Report	Complaint validity checked to make sure whether denial or omission is valid.	MRT
Step 3 – Investigations open up in case of valid denial or omission	Investigation starts to find the most suitable solution, thus ensuring information dissemination, or correction of omission.	IT, IDC
Step 4 – Recommendations	Recommendations provided to help make the final decision.	IT, IDC
Step 5 – Final Decision	Final decision made to close the file or implement the recommendations, to disseminate information or correct its omission	ES, Head of GCGHU

4. EFFECTIVENESS AND REVISION

These Procedures shall become effective upon approval by the Executive Secretary of the OSS. They will apply to all ongoing OSS projects and programs to the extent reasonably possible, and to those that will be approved after their effective date.

These Procedures shall remain in force until amended or replaced. They shall be reviewed and updated as necessary.