![USAID logo - United States Agency for International Development, FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE]

DIGITAL INVESTMENT TOOL
An Approach to Incorporating Digital Development
Best Practices in Your Activity

Many USAID activities implement digital systems* to make development more adaptive, efficient, and responsive to citizens and decision-makers. Using digital systems can help USAID improve the effectiveness and efficiency of activities and support partner countries on their journey to self-reliance through increased information sharing and improved government and civil society capacity. Over time, USAID has learned that these investments often face predictable challenges that can be addressed at the design phase. The Digital Investment Tool is designed for mission staff to ensure that USAID and its implementing partners consider best practices, based on the Principles for Digital Development, when developing digital systems.

This tool is intended to support work planning, either on a stand-alone activity such as an e-government activity, or on a component of an activity such as a market information system within an agricultural development activity.

There are 13 best practice topics, "elements", to select from. Each element contains a scale from *Nascent* to *Optimized*. Participants mark where they are and discuss where they would like to be. By providing five stages, we acknowledge that USAID and its partners must often make strategic choices about where to invest their time and resources—it isn't all or nothing.
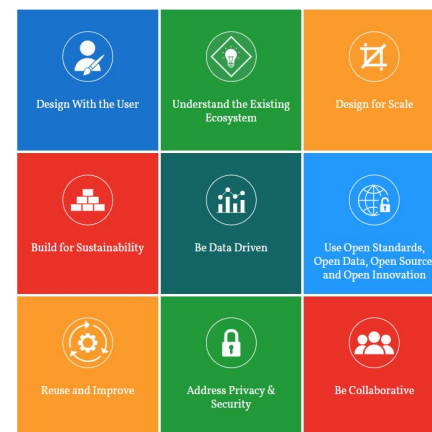
The Elements of Digital System Planning:

1. Development Challenge
2. Local Ownership
3. Policy Landscape
4. Digital Ecosystem
5. Stakeholder Engagement

6. System Users
7. Total Cost of Ownership
8. Scale
9. Data & Feedback

10. Open vs. Proprietary
11. Privacy & Security
12. Reuse & Improvement
13. Change Management

The tool is intended to support a participatory process between USAID, its implementing partners, and stakeholders who are involved in designing, creating proposals for, evaluating, and making purchasing decisions on digital systems. Ideally, the facilitator will have some technical experience with digital technology. A facilitator's guide is available at the end of the tool.

A variety of terms may be used to describe digital investments, for example, digital technology, digital solutions, data systems, digital tools, etc. For the purposes of this document all of the aforementioned will be represented by the term digital systems.

Principles *for* Digital Development

USAID worked with other donors and multilateral organizations to develop a set of guidelines that help development practitioners integrate best practices into digital-enabled programs and avoid common missteps. Visit
digitalprinciples.org

Design With the User	Understand the Existing Ecosystem	Design for Scale
Build for Sustainability	Be Data Driven	Use Open Standards, Open Data, Open Source, and Open Innovation
Reuse and Improve	Address Privacy & Security	Be Collaborative

Using the Tool: There are 13 elements to choose from. For each there is a worksheet for maturity assessment and action planning:

Maturity Assessment Worksheet

The element name and main issue for consideration.

Term definitions. 📖

An explanation of why the element is important to address.

Documents that may include information to help determine the maturity stage.

Development Challenge
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Understanding the development challenge and how the digital system helps address it

Definition: Theory of Change
A narrative description of how and why a purpose or result is expected to be achieved in a particular context.

Needs Assessment, Business Case, or Scope of Work

It is common for technology solutions to be proposed for development problems as if they are a cure-all, but there is not always sufficient attention to whether the proposed "solutions" actually fit the problems or take into account the issues underlying those problems. Without ensuring that the digital system is appropriate for the problem especially as defined by local stakeholders, you run the risk of using technology for its own sake rather than in service of the development outcomes you want.

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No or scant mention of the development challenge and how the digital system addresses it	→ Speaks generically or superficially about how the digital system fits into the broader development effort	→ Articulates a case for why the digital system solves some or all of the development challenge	→ Articulates a theory of change for the development effort that incorporates local perspectives and priorities → Details how the digital system supports that theory of change	→ Includes a theory of change that is co-created with local stakeholders → Details how the digital system supports the development effort's theory of change and how that contribution will be validated or tested

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning ☐

Sidebar tabs: 1. Dev't Challenge | 8. Scale | 2. Local Ownership | 9. Data & Feedback | 10. Open/Proprietary | 3. Policy Landscape | 4. Ecosystem | 11. Privacy & Security | 12. Reuse & Improve | 5. Stakeholders | 13. Change Mgmt | 6. System Users | 7. Cost of Ownership | Facilitation Guide

The maturity scale gives five stage descriptions for the element from *Nascent* to *Optimized*. Find the stage that describes your level of planning (at the proposal evaluation or design phase) or execution (at the implementation phase). Mark the stage that most closely matches.

A space for notes from the conversation, including evidence or examples that demonstrate why a maturity stage was selected.

Mark here if this element will be a focus for action planning.

Action Planning Worksheet

If the element is prioritized for action planning

Links to additional resources that users can access, including those for the relevant Principles for Digital Development.

Clickable tabs that show which element you are on (red) and link to others (gray).

Important probing questions to prompt a secondary level of analysis on the issue.

Development Challenge
ACTION PLANNING

Understanding the development challenge and how the digital system helps address it

Secondary Analysis

A. What is the specific development challenge we are trying to solve? Have the local stakeholders defined that challenge?

B. Are we solving the right problem? Is it crucial to local stakeholders? Is it crucial to mission strategy? If not either, is there suitable demand to proceed?

C. What is the desired outcome? What's your vision of success? What's local stakeholders' vision of success? Who stands to benefit and why?

D. What about the development challenge makes it suitable to be addressed by a digital system? What could make it unsuitable? How can we deepen our understanding?

E. What are the risks of applying a digital system to this challenge? What type of risk is tolerable?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Relevant Principles for Digital Development:
- **Design with the User**
- **Understand the Existing Ecosystem**
- **Build for Sustainability**
- **Be Collaborative**

Other Tools and Resources:
- Tips for Producing Promising Development Hypotheses
- Integrating Mobiles into Development Projects
- WHO Guideline: recommendations on digital interventions for health system strengthening

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

Sidebar tabs: 1. Dev't Challenge | 8. Scale | 2. Local Ownership | 9. Data & Feedback | 10. Open/Proprietary | 3. Policy Landscape | 4. Ecosystem | 11. Privacy & Security | 12. Reuse & Improve | 5. Stakeholders | 13. Change Mgmt | 6. System Users | 7. Cost of Ownership | Facilitation Guide

An action planning table to capture decisions reached on:
- Action ideas: what you commit to in order to address issues raised in the maturity assessment
- Next steps: concrete steps to implement the action idea
- Person(s) responsible: who will be involved in implementation
- Timeline: the timing (e.g., milestones, deadlines) for each next step

Development Challenge
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Understanding the development challenge and how the digital system helps address it

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Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

I. Dev't Challenge
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Development Challenge
ACTION PLANNING

Understanding the development challenge and how the digital system helps address it

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ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

1. Dev't Challenge
2. Local Ownership
3. Policy Landscape
4. Ecosystem
5. Stakeholders
6. System Users
7. Cost of Ownership
8. Scale
9. Data & Feedback
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2 Local Ownership
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Planning for sustainable local ownership from the outset

Definition: Local owner
Organization or entity who will have ultimate control over the system.

Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Documentation & Dissemination Plan

The design, ownership, and involvement of local and international actors can sustain the learnings and implementation beyond the initial phase. Although this can come with trade-offs in efficiency, it can greatly increase the system's chance of being sustained and scaled. Possible local owners may include the host country government's relevant line ministry, a local CSO, or a private sector actor. The total cost of ownership is critical to consider for local ownership - see Element #7 for more information.

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No local owner specified → No plan to define ongoing resource needs beyond donor funding	→ Identifies potential local owner(s) → Plans to identify resource needs beyond donor support	→ Identifies the most appropriate local owner and has a clear plan to engage them → Identifies general roles of the local owner, esp. vis-a-vis the implementing partner → Includes a resource plan for sustainability as a deliverable or milestone well before the end of the initiative	→ Has plans for a written agreement with defined local owner and vendor roles (e.g., MOU, service-level agreement) → Processes for decision-making on strategy, design will include participation from the local owner → Plan for sustainability outlined and agreed upon by local owner	→ If possible, there is a co-creation process and joint implementation plan with clear roles and milestones → Processes for decision-making on strategy, design and implementation will be driven by the local owner → Plan for sustainability outlined and agreed upon by local owner

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

1. Dev't Challenge
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2 Local Ownership
ACTION PLANNING

Planning for sustainable local ownership from the outset

Secondary Analysis

A. How can local ownership be planned for from the beginning, instead of a hand off at the end of the project? If complete local ownership from the outset is not possible, how can it be phased in over time?

B. If technical assistance is planned, can technical advisors be embedded within the local institution?

C. Is the digital system embedded in the local institution's IT system? If not, do they have full user rights to view data and administer the system? Are programmers working in partnership with the institutions IT team?

D. Does the local owner have the capacity to administer and maintain the system? If not, are there plans to develop or ensure their capacity to do so?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

3 Policy Landscape
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Accounting for relevant local ICT policies, guidelines, and strategic plans

Definition: ICT
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the technology that stores, retrieves, manipulates, transmits and/or receives information electronically in a digital form.

Landscape Analysis

Digital systems designed without understanding of local policies will be limited in their ability to scale beyond small pilots and may be in violation of existing government standards or policies. These policies may be at the national, state, and/or district level, as appropriate. There may also be relevant sector or geographic-specific ICT plans.

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No or scant mention of local policies or guidelines	→ Mentions relevant policies and guidelines	→ Includes a plan to review existing guidelines and policies	→ Details relevant policies and guidelines and how they will influence the system design and implementation	→ Details current and planned revisions to policies and guidelines and how this may influence system in the future

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

1. Dev't Challenge
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3 Policy Landscape
ACTION PLANNING

Accounting for relevant local ICT policies, guidelines, and strategic plans

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Secondary Analysis

A. What relevant local data, ICT, and intellectual property policies and regulations exist, including from different levels of government, and how do they constrain or enable the system? How will those policies and regulations be addressed? Are there planned policy changes that may affect the digital system?

B. Are there any cross-government initiatives to coordinate ICT and data use? How should these be engaged?

C. Are there technical working groups or other coordinating mechanisms across government, civil society, and other implementing organizations who inform policy development that you want to engage? How will you engage them?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

1. Dev't Challenge
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4 Digital Ecosystem
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Understanding the global and the local digital ecosystems

1. Dev't Challenge
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Definition: Ecosystem
The culture, gender norms, political environment, economy, technology infrastructure, and other factors that can affect an individual's ability to access and use a technology or to participate in an initiative.

Landscape Analysis

Interventions designed without understanding the digital ecosystem may duplicate existing efforts or not properly leverage existing platforms, data, and registries. This may result in wasted money, limit data sharing opportunities, and contribute to a fragmented ecosystem. Local providers and institutions are essential parts of the digital ecosystem. Existing ICT systems and data sources are also important elements of the ecosystem to consider (including those that are supported by external entities, e.g., DHIS2 or Microsoft).

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No or scant mention of other relevant ICT systems	→ Considers global ICT standards, platforms and tools → Includes a plan to review the local digital ecosystem	→ Builds upon global ICT standards, platforms and tools → Includes a plan to review the local digital ecosystem → Mentions other relevant local ICT systems and institutions	→ Builds upon global ICT standards, platforms and tools → Identifies the local institutions, communities, platforms, and projects that are relevant to the initiative and its digital systems	→ Builds upon and contributes back to global ICT standards, platforms and tools → Clearly assesses the local digital ecosystem, including local providers, use of existing standards, platforms and tools, and its impact on interoperability, reuse, and adaptation strategies

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

4 Digital Ecosystem
ACTION PLANNING

Understanding the global and the local digital ecosystems

Secondary Analysis

A. What local, regional, and global institutions, networks, communities, platforms, and projects are relevant to the target users and digital systems of your initiative?

B. Does the initiative recognize how people informally operate within their systems and political and organizational cultures? Will local markets and cultural practices sustain digital systems required by your initiative?

C. What existing local and global technology and data standards, infrastructure, platforms, and tools are being used by your target population, in your geography, or in your sector? Can your initiative integrate with or extend these existing efforts? *Also see Elements #10 and #12.*

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

5 Stakeholder Engagement
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Engaging key stakeholders effectively

Successful initiatives will identify groups beyond the initial systems users, engage them throughout the initiative development lifecycle, and seek to contribute resources back to the broader stakeholder community. Understanding and addressing stakeholder needs and concerns early and communicating consistently can improve likelihood of support.

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No or scant mention of stakeholders	→ Identifies key stakeholders → Has identified only dissemination opportunities or local stakeholders	→ Identifies key stakeholders → Has a partial plan to engage (often during the beginning or end of an initiative)	→ Identifies all relevant direct and indirect stakeholders → Has plan to regularly engage them during all cycles of the initiative	→ Identifies all relevant direct and indirect stakeholders → Shows understanding of needs and motivations of these groups and has plan to address them → Has plan to regularly engage them during all cycles of the initiative, including plans to document and share lessons learned, programmatic and technology approaches, code and technical documentation

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

5 Stakeholder Engagement
ACTION PLANNING

Engaging key stakeholders effectively

Secondary Analysis

A. How and at what points in the initiative's lifecycle will you engage the stakeholders? What level of participation or formal sign off will be best? How will you articulate the value of their perspective? What concrete products and processes will be used to collaborate and contribute locally?

B. Are there other stakeholders that are relevant to the initiative? For example, have you contacted mobile network operators; the local Ministry of Information, Communication, and Technology; USAID mission staff such as the STIP POC, data steward?

C. Is anyone else trying to solve this problem? How are they attempting to do this? Could collaboration help? Should we collaborate with them?

D. Who may oppose the system, e.g., doctors who may oppose letting nurses use decision support tools or agriculture price setters who might lose out if farmers could access crop prices? How will you engage them?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

6 System Users
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Designing and implementing a digital system that addresses the needs of system users

Definition: System User
People who will interact directly with the tool or system.

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Failure to understand and involve a system's users is one of the top reasons that ICT systems fail to reach their potential. Understanding users and getting their feedback throughout the implementation timeline will result in a tool that is more usable, has a greater chance of being adopted, and will increase user ownership of the system.

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No or scant description of systems users or plan to engage them	→ Identifies potential systems users → Plans to engage users as part of a needs assessment	→ Identifies potential systems users → Plans to actively involve relevant users during the design	→ Identifies potential systems users → Plans to actively involve relevant users during the design, deployment, and maintenance phases	→ Identifies potential systems users → Demonstrates clear understanding of user needs and workflows and details plan to support users to adapt to any new practices → Clearly describes planned co-creation approaches with users during the design, deployment, and maintenance phases

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

6 System Users
ACTION PLANNING

Designing and implementing a digital system that addresses the needs of system users

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Secondary Analysis

A. Who are the system users? How will you develop an understanding of their abilities (e.g., user profiles, focus groups, testing, and iterating)?

B. How can the system be adapted around users, rather than forcing users to accommodate the system?

C. How will you develop an understanding of the incentives of the system users and take them into account in the design process?

D. How are the system's technical requirements driven by data and decision needs related to the development intervention?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

7 Total Cost of Ownership
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Planning for the full costs of designing, operating, and maintaining the system over its lifetime

Clear identification of costs for implementation, operation, and maintenance are critical so that an institution can have a clear view as to what resources are required to support a system long-term (e.g., beyond the life of USAID funding). Without this, local ownership is often not possible, and systems maintenance or hardware upgrades may not be available.

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No costs included beyond initial stage	→ Includes costs for vendor to support maintenance	→ Includes costs to support maintenance, and has considerations for the system's long-term ownership by government or appropriate local party	→ Includes cost considerations for the system's long-term ownership by government or appropriate local party → Includes costs of initial and periodic supportive supervision or training of government staff and establishment of appropriate hosting environment → Identifies potential sources of funds to support long-term ownership	→ Includes cost considerations for the system's long-term ownership by government or appropriate local party → Includes costs of initial and periodic supportive supervision or training of government staff and establishment of appropriate hosting environment → Identifies a plan to resource long-term ownership

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

8. Scale | 1. Dev't Challenge

9. Data & Feedback | 2. Local Ownership

10. Open/Proprietary | 3. Policy Landscape

11. Privacy & Security | 4. Ecosystem

12. Reuse & Improve | 5. Stakeholders

13. Change Mgmt | 6. System Users

Facilitation Guide | 7. Cost of Ownership

7 Total Cost of Ownership
ACTION PLANNING

Planning for the full costs of designing, operating, and maintaining the system over its lifetime

Secondary Analysis

A. What is the intended sustainability for the initiative (time-bound, transition to maturity sustaining or commercial model, long-term ownership by other entity)? *Also see Element #6.*

B. Are there plans to develop or ensure the long-term owner's capacity to operate and maintain the system?

C. Does the budget include implementation costs such as system configuration and deployment, training, user testing, and transaction, service, or licensing fees?

D. Does the budget account for scaling costs, replacement of equipment, and ongoing administration and maintenance such as system upgrades, bug fixes, etc.?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

8 Scale
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Defining intended scale of the digital system and how implementation and maintenance support may vary at different levels of scale

Definition: Scale
A definition of what widespread adoption looks like for the context—percentage of population, number of users and/or geographic reach.

Budget

Failure to account for scale may limit the ability to support user needs of the system and may result in an inability to adapt the system to accommodate expansion. The strategies for support and maintenance of systems may vary at different levels of scale. Technological components, e.g., hardware, software, bandwidth, etc., may need to be changed as usage, numbers of clients, users, and connections increase. Capacity building and system support activities may need to be built into the budget and schedule as the scale changes.

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ Does not define intended scale	→ Defines intended scale	→ Defines intended scale → Articulates changes that may need to be made as scale increases	→ Defines intended scale → Articulates changes that may need to be made as scale increases → Provides clear budget figures to support	→ Defines intended scale → Articulates changes that may need to be made as scale increases → Provides clear budget figures to support → Defines changes to roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders at scale

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

1. Dev't Challenge
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8 Scale
ACTION PLANNING

Defining intended scale of the digital system and how implementation and maintenance support may vary at different levels of scale

Secondary Analysis

A. Could collaboration with other institutions or development projects or activities in the country or region increase scale of the digital system? What about technology companies or private sector partners?

B. Can you identify a phased approach to reach your projected scale?

C. Have you reviewed your activity to identify which components can be scaled as-is and which will need to be adapted or upgraded as scale or scope increases?

D. Have you identified risks for scaling and developed mitigation plans to address them?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

9 Data & Feedback
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Using M&E data and other feedback to inform decisions about development interventions, including use of the digital system

Definition: System Data
Quantitative and qualitative information about how users interact with the system.

Management Plan; Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan

It is important to design feedback and data collection processes so that they generate information that supports effective decision-making. Data generated by the digital system should be used to inform our development programming (e.g., learning and adapting based on performance indicator data or managing supply chains based on commodity data). Similarly, the data and user feedback can inform how we manage the digital system in service of that programming (e.g., making system improvements to increase efficiency or effectiveness or scaling up).

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No plan to collect or use system M&E data	→ Has a clear plan to collect system M&E data and to use that data to inform basic system updates → Plans to use system data to inform the development activity	→ Has a clear plan to collect system M&E data, including data quality information → Plans to use system data to improve system performance and roll-out → Plans to use system data to support decision-making for the development activity	→ Has a clear plan to collect system M&E data, information on data quality, and user feedback → Plans to use system data to improve system roll-out performance, and decisions on scale → Plans feedback loops to share meaningful data with system stakeholders to inform broader development programming	→ Has a clear plan to collect system M&E data, information on data quality, and user feedback → Plans to use system data to improve system roll-out and performance, inform scale-up, and support programming decisions → Plans to co-design M&E efforts and feedback loops with system stakeholders to inform broader development programming

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

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9 Data & Feedback
ACTION PLANNING

Using M&E data and other feedback to inform decisions about development interventions, including use of the digital system

Secondary Analysis

A. How can data literacy and a data use culture be built into the activity?

B. Are there important technical or data milestones (beyond midline and endline) that should be included in the work plan or monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan?

C. What qualitative data, such as user feedback, and examples of the use of the system can be used to inform the development of the activity?

D. How will determine the impact of the digital system?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

10 Open vs. Proprietary
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Considering open standards, open data, and open source software to enable data sharing and use resources efficiently

Without open standards and data, sharing information across systems becomes nearly impossible. Without well documented and shared software code, governments are more susceptible to being locked into a particular vendor or solution. Aligning with national standards is critical when making decisions about operating systems.

📚 **Definition: Open Standards**
Specifications developed, agreed to, adopted, and maintained by a community that enable data sharing across systems.

Definition: Open Data
Publicly available data that can be universally, readily, and freely accessed, used, and redistributed; structured for usability and computability.

Definition: Open Source
Software with source code that anyone can view, copy, modify, and share.

↻ **Technical Requirements Document**

NASCENT

OPEN
→ No mention of open source tools, open standards, or open data

PROPRIETARY
→ Plans to use proprietary without providing any rationale

EMERGING

OPEN
→ Mentions use of open source software

→ No mention of open standards or open data

PROPRIETARY
→ Provides rationale for using proprietary

ESTABLISHED

OPEN
→ Plans to use open source software that has a strong community

→ Proposes to adhere to open standards and to use open data

PROPRIETARY
→ Proposes to use proprietary system with clear rationale

→ Mentions data sharing (e.g., through an API)

ADVANCED

OPEN
→ Uses open source software with strong community and has plans to update relevant code bases

→ Proposes to use open data and adhere to open standards and national standards

PROPRIETARY
→ Has a clear rationale for system or software selection and explains how it aligns with national standards

→ Proposes to provide developer guide for system updates or modifications

→ Has a plan to share data (e.g., by developing an API)

OPTIMIZED

OPEN
→ Uses open source and has plans to update relevant code bases. Includes plan to engage with and strengthen relevant open source community

→ Plans to use open data and adhere to open standards and national standards

PROPRIETARY
→ Has strong justification for use of proprietary software and explains how software aligns with national standards

→ Proposes to provide developer guide for updates or modifications of system. Has identified local community of developers that can support

→ Has a plan to share data (e.g., by developing an API)

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

10 Open vs. Proprietary
ACTION PLANNING

Considering open standards, open data, and open source software to enable data sharing and use resources efficiently

Secondary Analysis

A. How can open source options be included when evaluating technology options?
B. For technology options being considered, what is the strength of the community and documentation around the various solutions?
C. If the activity develops new software code, does it make sense for it to be developed to be open source, so that others can copy, modify, and share?
D. Can the activity build on existing open APIs to make future integrations easier?
E. Can an open source license be planned for, such as Open Data Commons or Creative Commons license?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

1. Dev't Challenge
8. Scale
2. Local Ownership
9. Data & Feedback
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10. Open/Proprietary
4. Ecosystem
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Privacy & Security
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Addressing data privacy and security

Digital systems may deal with sensitive personal or organizational information and everyone has a right to have their information managed responsibly. Fear of loss of privacy may be a barrier to use of a system or accessing services. Security breaches can be damaging for governments and negatively impact the public's confidence.

Definition: Data Privacy vs. Security
Privacy is about authorized access to personally identifiable information— who has it and who defines it. Security is about protecting data against unauthorized access.

Security Plan, Privacy Plan

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No mention of privacy or security of data	→ Partially or generically discusses privacy and security approaches to be used	→ Mentions nationally and internationally relevant security and privacy policies → Partially or generically discusses how security will be implemented	→ Addresses required USAID system security guidance, and nationally and internationally relevant security and privacy policies → Fully discusses front end security, back end security, encryption, and physical security	→ Addresses required USAID system security guidance, and nationally and internationally relevant security and privacy policies → Fully discusses front end security, back end security, encryption, and physical security → Has a plan to review and update security protocol as required annually

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

1. Dev't Challenge
8. Scale
2. Local Ownership
9. Data & Feedback
3. Policy Landscape
10. Open/Proprietary
4. Ecosystem
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❚❚ Privacy & Security
ACTION PLANNING

Addressing data privacy and security

Secondary Analysis

A. Who owns the data and who has access? Where is it stored? How is it transmitted? What protections have been put in place to secure it?

B. Have you performed a risk/benefit analysis on your data? Can you minimize the data being collected while still keeping the data useful? If you are working with vulnerable populations, have you considered how their data may need special protection? Do you have informed consent built into data collection process?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

12 Reuse & Improvement
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Assessing, reusing, and/or improving on existing frameworks, content, technologies, etc.

Each program and country is unique but there are many common elements, messages, approaches, workflows, and code bases which have been developed to address ICT or systems challenges. Reusing and adapting these resources can speed time to market, reduce costs, and improve the base of global goods available to other practitioners.

Definition: Reuse
Assessing what resources are currently available and using them as they are to meet program goals.
Definition: Improvement
Modifying existing tools, products, and resources to improve their overall quality, applicability, and impact.

Landscape Analysis

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No plan to explore reuse and improving on existing frameworks, content, and technologies	→ Plans to assess the feasibility of reusing and improving on existing frameworks, content, and technologies	→ Has a clear plan to assess the reuse of existing frameworks, content, and technologies → Articulates how these can be adapted to the local context	→ Has a clear plan to assess the reuse of existing frameworks, content, and technologies → Articulates how these can be adapted to the local context → Has clear plan to improve on these frameworks, technologies, and approaches	→ Has a clear plan to assess the reuse of existing frameworks, content, and technologies → Articulates how these can be adapted to the local context → Has clear plan to improve on and share back these improvements in appropriate fora

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

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12 Reuse & Improvement
ACTION PLANNING

Assessing, reusing, and/or improving on existing frameworks, content, technologies, etc.

Secondary Analysis

A. Have you identified existing frameworks, content, technologies within the same country, region, or sector? Can any of those be easily adapted to your local context and needs to inform or ease system development?

B. Have you collaborated with others in the country, region, or sector who are working on similar frameworks, content, technologies? Do you have a plan to engage with them?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

13 Change Management
MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Managing the change required to successfully design, develop, deploy, and support the system

Definition: Change Management
Systematic and intentional approaches to preparing and supporting individuals and organizations in making a change.

Stakeholder Engagement or Communications Plan, Budget

Introducing new processes and tools can have a disruptive effect on a workplace and country system. Even well designed systems can meet resistance from stakeholder groups at any point in the system development lifecycle and negatively impact the effectiveness of a solution. Change management can help communicate to stakeholders why a tool is being developed, how it will impact their work, and how they will benefit.

NASCENT	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	ADVANCED	OPTIMIZED
→ No change management strategy	→ Has a plan to support limited group of stakeholders (clients, end users, managers)	→ Has identified initiative sponsors → Has a plan to support multiple stakeholder groups (clients, end users, managers) → Has limited discussion of impact of initiative on business processes	→ Has identified initiative sponsors and plans to develop sponsor activities → Has a plan to support multiple stakeholder groups (clients, end users, managers) → Has a basic business process re-engineering strategy	→ Has identified initiative sponsors and plans to develop sponsor activities → Has clearly identified all groups affected by system and their needs in adjusting to system and has a plan to support them throughout the process → Includes a comprehensive business process re-engineering plan → Has a plan to identify and manage resistance as well as communicate success

Maturity Assessment Notes

Priority Area for Action Planning

13 Change Management
ACTION PLANNING

Managing the change required to successfully design, develop, deploy, and support the system

Secondary Analysis

A. How can people within the organization or community contribute their ideas to change the digital system throughout design and implementation?

B. Who needs to be engaged to drive change? How will progress and learning be communicated?

C. How can the implementing partner, USAID, and any partner organizations win support for the change?

D. How can an iterative process of design>build>test>repeat be built in to ensure that flaws are detected and improved in a timely manner and that learning and adaptation can occur?

ACTION IDEA(S)	NEXT STEP(S)	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE

Facilitation Guide

USAID's Digital Investment Tool is intended to support a participatory process that involves several stakeholders, including those designing, creating proposals for, evaluating, and making purchasing decisions regarding the development of digital systems. Bringing together sector, program, and digital stakeholders ensures that there is a broad and shared understanding of expectations and requirements of the digital system.

This tool is best used once the need for a digital system has been proposed, rather than as an assessment of a mission's technology usage overall. With a specific need in mind, the tool can lead stakeholders through a discussion of whether the system is the right solution for the development challenge, how various stakeholders have been or will be engaged, and how the technical requirements can or do align to the Principles for Digital Development.

All elements are important to consider when designing a digital system. However, if time is limited, then participants should select elements that are most important to the success of the activity. They should proceed to conduct a maturity assessment for each selected element to determine where they fall on a spectrum of practice from *Nascent* to *Optimized*. The spectrum reflects the reality that, like most things in development, digital development is not binary—contextual factors and resource priorities will necessitate making decisions about what to optimize and when. The assessment process helps the group understand that spectrum and determine where they fall. Following the assessment, participants evaluate which elements are most important to further develop, and conduct action planning on those areas. Participants can revisit the tool in the future to explore other elements and track their progress.

Scenarios for Using the Tool

The participatory assessment and action planning process will differ depending on the purpose and where you are in the process of designing or implementing the digital system. This facilitation guide covers two potential scenarios, but the tool can be used outside of the scenarios below.

- **Work-planning:** This tool can help USAID teams and implementing partners jointly prioritize resources and identify how to strengthen the design, implementation, and use of digital systems.

- **Ongoing Implementation:** This tool can help USAID track progress, surface learning, and ensure that the implementation of the digital system is in line with the Principles for Digital Development.

The facilitation guide provides some Facilitation Essentials with a description of how to use the tool, and specific information about to potential scenarios for the tool. It suggests different ways that this tool can be used and who should participate. The following is an illustrative guide that can be customized based on the type of digital system, intended use, and contextual factors. You can also contact the Development Informatics team (devinfo@usaid.gov) for additional support.

Roles

Facilitator

This role is envisioned for a mission-based ICT Advisor, but could be any staff with an activity that includes digital technology. Ideally, the facilitator should be neutral regarding the exact digital system chosen while still bringing their experience and understanding of best practices to the conversation. The facilitator will:

- Convene the participants and explain the objectives of the maturity assessment and action planning exercise

- Ensure common understanding of the 13 elements covered by the tool and why and how they are relevant in the given context

- Facilitate a discussion for each element to identify where participants want to be or already are, depending on the use case

- Assist participants in prioritizing which elements are the most important for further attention

- Help the group decide how they want to move forward on the prioritized elements

Note-taker

It is helpful to have a note-taker who can capture highlights from the conversation. Preferably, this is someone other than the facilitator(s) or a participant. The note-taker will document the maturity assessment conversation and action planning decisions, and distribute the notes after the exercise. This tool contains space for notes on each page—this can be filled in manually on a print-out of the tool or entered into the fillable PDF version.

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Facilitation Essentials

Introduction and Framing

When using the tool, it is important to begin by developing a shared understanding with participants of the purpose and objectives of the exercise, the roles everyone will play, how the process will work, and what the timeline will be. If participants are less familiar with digital systems or the Principles for Digital Development, it may help to give them a brief overview at this point. Have an open discussion about the need driving the request for a digital system.

Next, introduce the tool and how you will be using it. Let participants know that the tool is not intended to be a test or scorecard but a conversation guide to spark the group's thinking about what level of maturity might make the most sense given the context and what it would take to reach that level. The other critical thing to note is that, in most situations, reaching a definitive consensus on the maturity level is less important than the discussion you have about what makes the most sense to operationalize the Principles for Digital Development in service of the development need or challenge and what concrete steps you will take to get there.

Key Talking Points

★ This tool helps identify what is most important to you when applying the Principles for Digital Development in your context and how to put those things into practice for your digital system.

★ The maturity assessment is based on a spectrum with levels from *Nascent* to *Optimized* because we often need make strategic choices about where to invest our time and resources—it isn't all or nothing.

Element Selection

Discuss with participants which of the 13 elements are the most critical to consider. Choose a few to prioritize, remembering that you can always revisit the tool later and cover additional elements as needed. It is also possible to select the priority elements in advance of the group session, but if you do, make sure to validate those selections with participants at the beginning of the session in case they have a different perspective on the priorities.

Key Talking Points

★ Carefully consider which are the most relevant and important elements given our context and the phase we are in (e.g., planning, design, or implementation).

★ We will cover ____ (#) elements during this session, with roughly 30-45 minutes for each. If there are important elements that we are not able to cover now, we may decide to revisit the tool at a later time.

Materials & Documentation

It is helpful for each participant to have a printed copy of the Maturity Assessment and Action Planning worksheets of the tool. You may also want to project worksheets, but if you don't have an easy way to do so, it is not necessary.

The worksheets contain space for notes and can be filled in manually on a printed copy or entered into the fillable PDF version. Eventually, for documentation, any notes should be entered into the PDF version and shared with participants. The PDF is also editable, so you can revisit and update the notes as needed.

Timing

Each maturity assessment and action planning discussion will vary in length. For elements where there is greater clarity already and obvious next steps, 30 minutes may be enough. For elements that need more discussion or extensive planning, it may take 45-60 minutes. This timing can be accelerated if participants knowledgeable about the digital system requirements or implementation can do pre-work to identify information that may help quickly determine the relevant maturity stage.

Alternatively, if you have enough participants, you can divide into smaller groups that each cover different elements simultaneously and come back together to report out and reach final determinations. Doing so may shorten the time needed.

1. Dev't Challenge
8. Scale
2. Local Ownership
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Facilitation Essentials cont.

Maturity Assessment

Begin the discussion of each chosen element by using the Maturity Assessment worksheet to describe the element, why it is important, any clarifying definitions, and the five maturity stages beginning with *Nascent* and ending with *Optimized*. You can also project the worksheet on a screen or give participants printed copies so that they can follow along. Give everyone 1-2 minutes to consider which level is the most appropriate for the context. Once everyone has had a chance to consider, prompt them to explain why they chose the level they did.

Remember that you do not necessarily have to reach a consensus as long as the discussion suggests a general way forward that can be detailed during Action Planning. Also, the appropriate level of maturity may differ across different components of the digital system or phases of planning, design, and implementation. If your use case requires it, you can set an "ultimate" goal for the maturity level and intermediate maturity level goals for different phases or components. The note-taker should use the space provided to capture details related to these determinations and any other important points from the discussion, especially those that might inform Action Planning.

Key Talking Points

★ The group does not need to necessarily reach a consensus about which level is best. You'll use the maturity spectrum to spark a discussion about what level might make the most sense to us and what it would take to reach that level.

★ Remember when you look at the maturity levels to consider which you think is the most appropriate given the scope of _____ (e.g., system component(s) or phase/time horizon).

Action Planning

Following the Maturity Assessment, give the group about five minutes to brainstorm actions that may be needed to reach the desired level of maturity. The secondary analysis questions provided may help to spark the group's thinking. You do not need to have a technical discussion about the questions during this session, but may consider doing so in the future.

Then, depending on the number of ideas surfaced, you may need to lead the group through a prioritization exercise to select which to adopt for Action Planning. Determine how many action ideas you can adopt depending on feasibility and the level of effort you can commit to implementing your plan within a timeframe you determine. Once the group identifies their chosen ideas, guide participants through the creation of a rough plan, using the Action Planning worksheet table to capture the idea, key next steps, a person or people responsible, and any milestones or deadlines for the next steps.

Key Talking Points

★ The secondary analysis questions may help to spark your thinking about possible actions.

★ Action ideas should be as specific as possible, within your control or manageable interest, and within a particular timeframe (usually six months to a year).

For Additional Help, Contact Us

Digital technology can be a powerful resource for improving development outcomes, but also challenging to design and implement. Contact the Development Informatics team at devinfo@usaid.gov for resources and mechanisms or to schedule a consultation.

You can also see additional work and resources from the team and the Center for Digital Development at digitaldevelopment.org/

Scenario: Work Planning

Objective
To help USAID teams and their implementers jointly identify and prioritize how to strengthen the design and use of program-funded digital systems from the outset.

Participants
Participants may include all relevant USAID staff, especially the COR/AOR/Activity Manager; implementing partner(s); local owner; technology service provider and mobile network operators (MNOs); other development partners.

Process
Note: If using the tool as part of initial work planning (as opposed to subsequent annual or biannual work plans), make sure there is enough clarity about the basic timeline, roles and responsibilities that you can frame the self-assessment and action planning.

If this tool was used in the solicitation design and proposal evaluation, it should already be clear what maturity stages are anticipated for the elements, but now is a good time to go through the Maturity Assessment worksheets again as a group to clarify expectations and ensure there is a shared understanding of what those stages look like in practice. Next, discuss how the identified maturity stages will translate into discrete activities in the work plan. Use the Action Planning worksheet to inform these decisions and the space provided to capture the agreed-upon next steps. The secondary analysis questions can be helpful in identifying specific areas where more attention is needed. You won't discuss the technical content of the questions or attempt to answer them, but instead use them to note any specific actions you may want to take in order to answer them in the future or address the issues they raise. For example, one of the questions for #6 System Users is, "How can the system be adapted around users, rather than forcing users to accommodate the system?" Instead of answering this specific question during the Action Planning session, discuss actions you want to include in the work plan as part of a user-centered design approach that will respond to this issue. The action planning discussion may also be a good time to note risks and uncertainties that you will want to revisit—you may choose to include an action related to gaining clarity on those issues.

You do not need to actively use the tools and resources in the "For More Information" section during your session. These links are provided in case you need additional information about key topics or tasks that may come up in the discussion.

For those elements not covered in the solicitation or the proposal, use the Maturity Assessment worksheets to lead participants in a discussion to determine what is a feasible level of maturity you would like to reach as you design and eventually implement the digital system and how you plan to reach it. You may have different levels of maturity for different phases of development.

If this tool was not used earlier in the process, you will begin with the Maturity Assessment worksheets. Lead participants in a discussion of each of the 13 elements to determine what is a feasible level of maturity you would like to reach as you design and eventually implement the digital system. Selected elements do not need to be discussed in any particular order, so if there are some that are more straightforward than others, perhaps begin with those so you can move through them quickly. Encourage everyone to keep in mind any contextual and budgetary constraints, along with the scope of the contract or award. Some things may be outside of your manageable interest, and if so, it is important to note them and why. If it seems like participants consistently choose the *Advanced* or *Optimized* stage, do a reality-check by asking if the system can be successful in meeting the identified need at a lower stage for certain elements.

Once this is done, discuss how the identified maturity stages will translate into discrete activities in the work plan or technical requirements for the digital system, using the Action Planning worksheet to inform a deeper analysis and capture the resulting next steps.

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Scenario: Ongoing Implementation

Objective

To help USAID, implementing partners, and other stakeholders pause and reflect in order to track progress, surface learning, and ensure that the implementation of the digital system is in line with the Principles for Digital Development.

Participants

Participants may include all relevant USAID staff, especially the COR/AOR/Activity Manager and Project Manager; implementing partner(s); local owner; technology service provider and mobile network operators. Consider also involving relevant beneficiaries and end users or at least finding ways to bring their feedback into the process since they may have different perspectives.

Process

If this tool was used in work planning, the discussion will focus on getting a sense of where you stand on the maturity stages for the elements and comparing those to where you said you wanted to be. Because the maturity stages are written from a planning perspective, make sure to expand the discussion to also cover how well you are implementing the plan you put in place. For example, one of the _Optimized_ stage criteria for #9 Data & Feedback is having "a clear plan to collect system M&E data, information on data quality, and user feedback." During a pause and reflect discussion, you should discuss not only whether there is a plan, but also if it is being followed to actually collect and use the data and feedback for decision-making. If there is a discrepancy between the maturity stage you identified during work planning and where you are now, consider if this is an element that is really crucial to focus on addressing given the current context and resource realities. If so, use the Action Planning worksheet to guide a discussion about what steps you will take to use best practice in your implementation.

The secondary analysis questions can be helpful in identifying specific areas where you can integrate those best practices. You won't discuss the technical content of the questions, but instead use them to note any specific actions you may want to take in order to address the issues they raise. For example, one of the questions for #6 System Users is, "How can the system be adapted around users, rather than forcing users to accommodate the system?" Instead of answering this specific question during the Action Planning session, discuss actions you want to incorporate into implementation as part of a user-centered design approach that will respond to this issue. Document your plans for the priority elements on the relevant Action Planning worksheets.

You do not need to actively use the tools and resources in the "For More Information" section during your session. These links are provided in case you need additional information about key topics or tasks that may come up in the discussion.

If this tool was not used before implementation began, the conversation should focus less on planning and implementation of a specific plan and more on how well your implementation addresses the various elements and the best practice described through the maturity stages for each. For example, #9 Data & Feedback examines the use of M&E data and other feedback to inform decisions about development interventions, including use of the digital system. The Maturity Assessment worksheet describes increasing stages of more sophisticated data/feedback collection, more systematic adaptation based on that data and feedback, and more intentional engagement with stakeholders about the data and feedback. You can assess current practice against the maturity implied in the five stages, as well as where you'd like to be.

If there is a discrepancy between the maturity stage that most closely matches your current practice and where you'd like to be and everyone agrees that this is a priority to focus on addressing given the current context and resource realities, use the Action Planning worksheet and the secondary questions provided to guide a discussion about what steps you will take to close the gap. Document your plans for the priority elements on the relevant Action Planning worksheets.

Keep in mind that depending on where you are in the lifecycle of implementation, some elements may be less relevant. Focus on areas where there is a greater potential for improvement (e.g., you have the ability to change things or you aren't already at a high level of maturity) and that improvement will have an impact on the development challenge you are trying to address.

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