



Principles *for* Digital Development



Design with the User

- Incorporate **multiple user types and stakeholders** in each phase of the project lifecycle.
- Design solutions that **improve users' current processes**, saving time, using fewer resources and improving quality.
- Develop **context-appropriate solutions** informed by users' priorities and needs.
- Develop the solution in an **incremental and iterative manner**, with clear objectives and purpose in mind.
- Ensure the design is sensitive to and considers the needs of the **traditionally underserved**.
- Embrace an **iterative process** that allows for incorporating feedback and adapting your solution.
- Be open about setting expectations and let people opt out of participating in design process.



Understand the Existing Ecosystem

- Engage with your target users, and consult existing research, to develop an understanding.
- Coordinate with other implementing organizations, civil society and the government early on too.
- Ensure your initiative aligns with existing technological, legal and regulatory policies.
- Involve community members, local and national government, donors and other implementing organizations.
- Monitor the ecosystem for changes.



Design for Scale

- Plan and design for scale from the start.
- Develop a definition of scale for your initiative.
- Keep your design **simple, flexible and modular** to make it easy to change your content and adapt to other contexts.
- As you make **technology choices**, think about if they will make it easier or harder to scale.
- Identify partners early who can help to scale your solution.
- Consider your funding model.
- Gather evidence and demonstrate impact before attempting to scale.
- Don't attempt to scale without **fully validating that your solution is appropriate**.



Build for Sustainability

- Plan for sustainability from the start.
- Develop a definition of sustainability for your initiative.
- Identify and implement a **sustainable business model**.
- Use and **invest in** local information technology service providers.
- Engage local governments and integrate national strategies into programming.
- Collaborate instead of competing and partner to identify the best solution with the greatest impact.
- Build a program that can be adapted as user needs and the ecosystem change.



Be Data Driven

- Design programs so that **impact can be measured continuously and incrementally**.
- Leverage existing data, including open data sets and with interoperable systems.
- Utilize rigorous data collection methods.
- Help close knowledge gaps by contributing data to the development community.
- Use quality real-time or timely data to support rapid decision-making, improve programming for users and inform strategy.
- Present data in formats that are easy to interpret and act on, such as data visualizations.
- Create a data use culture by prioritizing capacity building and data use efforts.
- Be holistic about data collection and analysis. Collect data from multiple sources.
- Identify and use open data and interoperability standards.
- Collect and use data responsibly according to international norms and standards.



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Use Open Standards, Open Data, Open Source, and Open Innovation

- **Define and communicate what being open means** for your initiative.
- **Adopt and expand on existing open standards**—specifications developed, agreed to, adopted and maintained by a community that enable the sharing of data across tools and systems.
- **Share non-sensitive data after ensuring data privacy needs are addressed** without restrictions on data use to enable open innovation by any group or sector.
- **Utilize existing open platforms** where possible to help automate data sharing, connect your tool or system with others and add flexibility to adapt to future needs.
- **Invest in software as a public good.**
- **Develop new code to be open source**, which anyone can view, copy, modify and share, and share the code in public repositories.
- **Enable innovation** by sharing freely without restrictions, collaborating widely and co-creating solutions when it makes sense in your context.



Reuse and Improve

- **Identify the existing technology solutions (local and global), data and frameworks being used by your target population, in your geography or in your sector.**
- **Develop modular, interoperable approaches** instead of those that stand alone.
- **Collaborate** with other digital development practitioners to become aware of existing tools and build relationships that could lead to the future reuse and improvement of your tools.



Address Privacy and Security

- **Define data ownership, sovereignty and access before any data are collected/captured.** Determine what laws and regulations need to be followed.
- **Keep the best interests** of end users and individuals whose data are collected at the forefront of your planning for upholding user privacy and ensuring data security and ethical project implementation.
- **Perform a benefit/risk analysis of the data being processed**, including who benefits and who is at risk.
- **Assess the risks** of unauthorized access or leakage of any stored data. Understand that risks are highly contextualized, not just to country, but also to communities, populations and periods of time.
- **Minimize the collection** of personal identifiable information. Consider how critical personal information is to the project's success and what the consequences would be if those data are exposed to third-parties.
- **Catalogue and track any personal or sensitive information captured throughout the project:** Create a plan for mid-project and post-project destruction or secure offline storage of sensitive data.
- **Be transparent** with individuals whose data are collected by explaining how your project will use and protect their data.
- **Obtain informed consent** prior to data collection. It is crucial to ensure that participants understand why their data are being collected, how data are used and shared, how they can access or change the data collected, and that they be given the option to refuse to participate.
- **Protect data** by adopting best practices for securing and restricting access to data.



Be Collaborative

- **Understand how your work fits into the global development landscape.** Identify others working on the same problem in other geographies and if there is a community of practice.
- **Engage diverse experts** across disciplines, countries and industries throughout the project lifecycle.
- **Plan to collaborate from the beginning.** Build collaborative activities into proposals, workplans, budgets, and job descriptions. Identify indicators for measuring collaboration in your monitoring and evaluation plan.
- **Document work, results, processes and best practices.** Share your code with the open source community, publish documents under a Creative Commons License, and participate in conferences and other forums to share your lessons learned and to learn from other practitioners.
- **Define how your project will contribute locally.** Collaboration is the first step in interoperability—define how your work can connect with local systems and what standards you need to adopt to facilitate these connections.