Digital Health Investment Review Tool

HOW TO USE THE TOOL
BACKGROUND

Too often, digital health investments are made without the time or resources to develop a deep technical knowledge of the information and communications technologies (ICTs) behind them, or the ecosystem in which these technologies are used.

We use the term digital health to refer to all concepts and activities at the intersection of health and ICTs, including mobile health (mHealth), health information technology, electronic health records (EHRs), and telehealth, and encompassing three main functions:

• the delivery of health information, for health professionals and health consumers, through the Internet and telecommunications media,

• using ICTs to improve public health services (e.g., through the education and training of health workers), and

• using health information systems (HIS) to capture, store, manage or transmit information on patient health or health facility activities.

Digital technologies may be applied in one or more ways to address Health Systems Challenges, as described in the WHO Classification of Digital Health Interventions.

GOAL & OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Digital Health Investment Review Tool is to provide high-level guidance based on widely-accepted best practice such as the Principles for Digital Development and the Donor Investment Principles that can be used to support strategic investments in the use of digital technologies to support public and global health.

Specific objectives include developing language and tools that can help:

• structure requests for proposals (or other donor procurement mechanisms),

• inform grants and contracts language, and

• support informed advice / decision-making by procurement officers considering digital health proposals.

The intent is for this work to be undertaken in an agile and iterative manner, with frequent focus groups and product testing with the intended users, described in the audience section below. The desired final products are intended to serve as global goods – tools that can be adapted and reused by a variety of audience segments for their own internal purposes.

AUDIENCE

The primary audience for this tool is individuals involved with designing, creating proposals for, evaluating, and making purchasing decisions regarding the development of digital health systems. This spans a number of actor groups including:

• **National governments**, including health and IT ministries, that are issuing calls for proposals for and/or reviewing potential digital health investments.

• **Regional bodies**, such as those at the sub-regional or region-wide levels, who are making recommendations on and providing guidance on digital health investments.

• **Donors**, who are funding or considering funding digital health activities.

• **Implementers**, who may use the criteria to ensure they are putting forward sound proposals.
INTRODUCTION

It is recognized that not all proposals may have space to detail each area in full. In recognition of this, we have provided references to deliverables or to a project’s budget where a proposal may reference the work to be done in a particular area. Given page limitations in RFPs, there is not always space available to fully elaborate a project’s digital health approach, and so it is envisaged that this tool can also be used in reviewing and approving workplans or sub-awards.

It is also possible that a proposal will describe more than one digital health intervention; in this case an average might be proposed where a proposal proposes 2 systems (e.g., an SMS appointment reminder system and a facility based Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system). They describe how they will handle security and privacy for the EMR quite well, earning a 5, but fail to describe the security and privacy concerns for the SMS system sending out the messages and how security and privacy would be handled on the recipient’s phones, thereby earning a 1. 5+1 = 6 points total divided by the 2 solutions proposed = 3 points average for privacy and security.

Depending on the stage of the system being proposed, more emphasis may be placed on some questions than others. For example, an early stage digital health innovation may be less focused on Total Cost of Ownership for a small field trial as compared to a system being proposed for national scale implementation.

Best Practices to Avoid Common Mistakes

Be sure the solution accounts for:

- **poor connectivity.** System should function well offline with intermittent power or connectivity.
- **maintenance and support costs.**
- **training** of new users as health workers are frequently transferred.
- **replacement** of devices due to theft, loss or damage and expected device life-span.
- **interoperability** with other national and local systems.
- **languages, literacy, phone ownership** and phone **access** of target users.
- **alignment** with the national digital health framework or architecture.
- **available physical infrastructure** within the community the tool is being implemented in.
**How to Use This Tool**

There are 12 elements of Digital Health Investment Review Tool included and for each there is a self-assessment worksheet:

### Scale, Implementation and Maintenance

**Question:** Describe the system’s intended scale and how implementation and maintenance support may vary at different levels of scale.

**Why is this important?**
- The strategies for support and maintenance of systems may vary at different levels of scale. Technological components may need to be changed as usage, numbers of clients, users and connections increase. Systems can scale both vertically and horizontally. Capacity building exercises and support may need to be built into the budget and schedule as the scale changes. Supervision and help desk strategies may need to change as scale increases and all of these have potential budget and schedule implications.

**Recommended Deliverable and useful resources to help determine the score:**
- Design for Scale; Build for Sustainability
- Global Goods; Quantity Costs
- Budget

**Reference Materials:**
- MAPS Toolkit: Axes 1 - Domain 1, Axes 5 - Domain 11
- WHO Beginnig with the end in mind
- PATH Journey to Scale

**Notes:**

**Score:**
- Does not define intended scale.
- Defines intended scale.
- Defines intended scale and articulates changes that may need to be made as scale increases.
- Defines intended scale and articulates changes that may need to be made as scale increases and provides clear budget figures to support.
- Defines intended scale and articulates changes that may need to be made as scale increases and provides clear budget figures to support, as well as changes to roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

Quick reference for the element you are in.

The scoring gives five stage descriptions for the element from **None or Nascent** to **Optimized**. Find the score that describes the level of planning or execution described.

Space for notes, including evidence/examples for why the score was selected.
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