

# DIGITAL FOR RESILIENCE AND FOOD SECURITY (RFS) PLANNING TOOL



## ▶ INTRODUCTION

We live in an increasingly digital world. While not every individual in the countries where USAID works has direct access to digital technology, we would be hard pressed to find anyone whose life and livelihood are not impacted in one way or another by digital technology.

In its first [Digital Strategy](#) USAID recognized this “rapid development and adoption of digital technology” as having “the power to spur economic growth, improve development outcomes, and lift millions out of poverty.” Yet despite the potential, it is not always obvious to USAID staff if or how there may be a role for digital technology in their projects and programs.

This tool seeks to provide a simple framework for determining *if* digital technology may be useful for certain scenarios. It will not answer exactly *how* digital technology can be used for each case, as the answer is always highly contextualized. However, it will help to point you in the right direction, no matter where you are in the program cycle. For more help with the *how*, you can reach out to one or more of the many resource people listed at the end of this document.



Photo by Hanz Rippe

To get started, answer a couple of questions to help frame the development context you're working with.

▶ **WHAT DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE IS YOUR TEAM TRYING TO ADDRESS?**

Empty text box for the first question.

▶ **WHAT ARE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS OF HOW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY COULD PLAY A ROLE IN ADDRESSING THAT DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE?**

Empty text box for the second question.

 ONCE YOU'VE THOUGHT THROUGH THE ABOVE, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING...

IF YOUR NEED IS...	ASK YOURSELF...	IF THE ANSWER IS YES...	THEN CONSULT THE FOLLOWING FOR HELP MOVING FORWARD... <sup>1</sup>
We believe that there's a <b>role for digital but we're not even sure where to start.</b>	Do any of our project stakeholders or beneficiaries have access to any form of digital technology?	We live in an increasingly digital world, so increasingly digital will play a role in USAID projects. Figuring out exactly where and how is the harder question sometimes.	<a href="#">Digital Tools in USAID Agricultural Programming</a> <a href="#">Digital Investment Tool Integrating Mobiles into Development Projects Handbook</a> <a href="#">Principles for Digital Development</a>
We want to <b>disseminate information to people.</b>	Do those individuals already have access to any devices that can be used to receive that information (e.g. mobile phone, computer, radio, TV)?	There very well may be a way to facilitate this using digital technology.	<a href="#">Selecting Digital Tools for Beneficiary Engagement</a> <a href="#">A Guide to Digital Feedback Loops</a>
We want to <b>gather information from people in order to make a decision.</b>	Do you have a way of reaching those people (whether in-person, by phone, or other means)?	Mobile devices can be used to collect information even in areas without mobile connectivity. If there is a will, there is almost always a way to use digital technology to assist with this in some capacity.	<a href="#">A Guide to Digital Feedback Loops</a> <a href="#">Considerations for Using Data Responsibly at USAID</a> <a href="#">COVID-19 and Digital Data Collection</a>

<sup>1</sup> We know not everyone has time to read through a bunch of resources, which is why we're also including a list of potential resource people at the end of this document.

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<p>We want to <b>facilitate improved transparency of a system or process.</b></p>	<p>Can parts or all of that system or process be digitized (or are they already digitized)?</p>	<p>There may be an opportunity to use digital technologies to create digital ledgers of records or to make processes more open (such as digitizing national procurement systems).</p>	<p><a href="#">Primer on Blockchain</a></p> <p><i>Note: Blockchain is not the only solution here, but we have not yet found any other relevant resources.</i></p>
<p>We have large volumes of data and <b>need help with analysis and/or forecasting.</b></p>	<p>Could that analysis or forecasting potentially benefit from computer-assisted support?</p>	<p>There may be an opportunity to make use of artificial intelligence/machine learning to help with this.</p>	<p><a href="#">Managing Machine Learning Projects in International Development: A Practical Guide</a></p>
<p>We need to <b>facilitate payments or access to financial services</b> for beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Is there a lack of existing formal financial services in these communities (such as bank branches)?</p>	<p>There may be an opportunity to make use of digitally-enabled financial services to facilitate that.</p>	<p><a href="#">Digital Financial Services for Agriculture Guide</a></p> <p><a href="#">Using Digital Tools to Expand Agricultural Insurance</a></p> <p><a href="#">What Works for Digital Financial Services in Agricultural Development?</a></p> <p><a href="#">Building Resilient and Inclusive Digital Ecosystems: A Toolkit for Using Digital Payments in Development Programs</a></p>

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<p>We want to better <b>understand conditions on the ground.</b></p>	<p>Is it impossible or inefficient to collect the data you need entirely through humans using paper-based methods?</p>	<p>There may be an opportunity for mobile data collection, remote sensing, sensors, Internet of Things (IoT), or geospatial/earth observation technologies.</p>	<p><a href="#">Seeds of Silicon: Internet of Things for Smallholder Agriculture</a></p> <p><a href="#">Guide for Adopting Remote Monitoring Practices</a></p> <p><a href="#">Third-Party Monitoring in Non-Permissive Environments</a></p>
<p>We want to make sure that <b>certain groups of people are not excluded or left behind in the digital economy.</b></p>	<p>Do certain groups have less access or ability when it comes to relevant digital technologies?</p>	<p>There may be an opportunity for USAID to promote more inclusive digital uptake by supporting initiatives that target those population segments (such as through specific product/service delivery, digital literacy training, or others).</p>	<p>See the <a href="#">ADS on Inclusive Development</a> for guidance on determining who is excluded and why.</p>



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<p>We want to <b>close the digital divide and/or address the digital inequities and digital harms</b> that certain groups, such as women and girls, people with disabilities, indigenous, LGBTQI, youth, and other marginalized populations face.</p>	<p>Is USAID in a position to potentially influence this through its programs?</p>	<p>Think about what USAID’s role might be. This could include promoting digital literacy and safety trainings and messaging, educating vulnerable groups about their rights as it relates to digital data and service, supporting the design and deployment of digital products/services aligned to their needs, and policy level engagement.</p>	<p><a href="#">Closing the Gender Digital Divide Primer</a>  <a href="#">Better Connectivity, Better Programs: How to Implement a Broadband Demand Aggregation Program</a>  <a href="#">Gender and ICT Toolkit</a>  <a href="#">Gender Digital Divide Online Course</a>  <a href="#">Principles for Driving the Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities</a>  <a href="#">PRO-IP Strategy</a>  <a href="#">Inclusive Development</a></p>
<p>We want to <b>facilitate improved market linkages</b>, such as traceability or trade facilitation.</p>	<p>Do at least some of the key market actors have access to digital technology?</p>	<p>There may be an opportunity to digitize some or all of the touchpoints involved.</p>	<p><i>We haven’t identified a great resource yet, but don’t let that stop you. Contact one of the resource people in the following table.</i></p>

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<p>We want to <b>make a registration system more efficient</b>, such as seed registry, land registry, or identification.</p>	<p>Is there political will to make this system more efficient?</p>	<p>There may be an opportunity to digitize part or all of this system, depending on the breadth of relevant technology access and availability.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Digital Identity and Inclusive Development</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Digital Farmer Profiles</u></a></p>
<p>We are interested in exploring how we can <b>engage with the private sector or support tech entrepreneurs</b>.</p>	<p>Are there private sector companies and/or entrepreneurs working in digital technology in the country with an interest in your sector?</p>	<p>There may be an opportunity to work with them in ways that are mutually beneficial, although make sure to do your due diligence first (or ask for help).</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>FinTech Partnerships Playbook</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>FinTech Partnerships Checklist</u></a></p>

▶ AFTER REVIEWING THE ABOVE, WHAT ARE YOUR TEAM'S INITIAL THOUGHTS OF HOW TECHNOLOGY COULD PLAY A ROLE IN ADDRESSING THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE YOU ARE WORKING ON?

▶ WHAT NEXT STEPS DO YOU THINK YOU NEED TO TAKE? CONSIDER LISTING OUT RESOURCES TO READ, QUESTIONS TO ASK, PEOPLE TO SPEAK WITH, OR ANYTHING ELSE THAT COMES TO MIND.