

Digital Expertise WITHIN USAID



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INTRODUCTION

USAID believes digital technology is transforming how people worldwide access information, goods, services, and opportunity and has the power to rapidly accelerate developing countries' journey to self-reliance. This belief has inspired USAID to launch its first ever [Digital Strategy](#), which provides a vision for how the agency can leverage digital tools and solutions in ways that advance the growth of self-reliant countries. This strategy is part of a broader agency effort to better organize and deploy digital expertise within USAID through a variety of both internal and external sources. This fact sheet highlights some of the key digital knowledge resources available to USAID staff and partners, including all members of the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS).

KEY KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES

RFS currently holds an IQC with Digital Frontiers, a cooperative agreement implemented by DAI, as a key resource for the bureau to explore how digital channels can be integrated into a wider range of activities and research. This vehicle is already generating a variety of work, including communications and knowledge management materials. RFS has also partnered with Digital Frontiers in a variety of other activities, such as:

- 1 A digital agricultural ecosystem assessment for USAID/Bangladesh to inform program design
- 2 A training curriculum for RFS on integrating digital channels into its programming adapted for a digital learning platform
- 3 Research on the trends associated with the use of technology for integrated pest management
- 4 Facilitation, research, planning, and analysis that looks into how the private sector and donors can jointly create a future where agricultural data is used to better benefit smallholder farmers
- 5 Research that conducts a robust, high-impact assessment of how the proliferation of digital technology and data analytics in agriculture is contributing to the lives of farmers and agricultural service providers
- 6 Digital agriculture ecosystem assessment to support USAID/Nepal analyze where digital technologies can improve the input market system and government subsidy program in Nepal

RFS INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Housed in the Program Office of RFS, the Inclusive Development Team includes a technical expert on digital development who is available to support staff and Missions on incorporating digital tools and approaches into programming in the areas of agriculture-led growth, resilience, nutrition and water security, sanitation and hygiene.

CENTER FOR DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

The Global Development Lab's Center for Digital Development (CDD) is a primary source for digital expertise within USAID. The CDD has five cross-cutting technical areas that work with Missions and Bureaus in USAID as well as the private sector and broader development community.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

Assists the growth of internet access in order to accelerate the development objectives of USAID activities across the world.

DIGITAL FINANCE

Assists people in gaining access to and use financial services that are relevant, accessible, affordable, and secure.

GEOCENTER

Uses geospatial technology, data analysis, and visualization techniques to support data driven strategic planning, design, and monitoring.

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATICS

Supports USAID and implementing partners to collect data in more efficient ways and then use digital information systems to make data-driven decisions that improve development outcomes while also addressing privacy and security concerns.

STRATEGY AND RESEARCH

Conducts research on social, political, and practical aspects of the use of emerging technologies in the countries where USAID works.

An example of CDD's support is a former partnership between CDD and RFS called Digital Development for Feed the Future. This partnership demonstrated how leveraging digital tools in relevant and responsible ways can help cost-effectiveness and improve development outcomes. It developed a wide variety of case studies, research, and tools that have been made [publicly available](#).

DIGITAL SECTOR COUNCIL

The Digital Sector Council was established as an internal committee of USAID staff to provide a forum for technical expertise within the agency to share knowledge, coordinate actions, advocate for the sector and Agency staff working on digital, and discuss issues related to USAID's work in digital development. If you are interested in joining this Council email digitaldevelopment@usaid.gov for more information. Some additional detail on the scope per the Digital Sector Council's Charter can be found below:

- Supporting implementation of USAID's Digital Strategy
- Facilitating and coordinating the exchange of information within USAID on digital development related issues, programs, and topics
- Enhancing collaboration within USAID, including between USAID/W and field missions, on digital development including programs, learning, personnel, and sector development
- Convening meetings, open to any interested USAID staff, to share general information on digital development issues
- As needed, establishing sub-committees or working groups

BUY-IN MECHANISMS FOR MISSIONS

There are several mechanisms that have a digital development focus that USAID Missions and Bureaus can use. Below is a list of these mechanisms and AOR or COR contacts.

MECHANISM NAME	DESCRIPTION	AOR/COR	AOR/COR EMAIL
Digital Frontiers	Digital Frontiers is a five-year (2017 – 2022) activity that's focus is to identify successful and sustainable digital approaches and scale their impact globally.	Fernando Maldonado (AOR)	fmaldonado@usaid.gov
Digital Frontiers Digital for Resilience and Food Security (D4RFS) Support IQC	RFS has a current buy in mechanism with Digital Frontiers called Digital for Resilience and Food Security (D4RFS) support IQC that focuses on helping RFS activities integrate digital tools their programs.	Meredith Soule	msoule@usaid.gov
Digital Economy and Market Development	DEMD is a three-year (2019-2022) activity that provides technical leadership and innovative new approaches concerning the digital economy, trade capacity building, private sector development, and business enabling environment.	Paul Fekete (COR)	pfekete@usaid.gov
Digital Apex	Digital Apex is a five-year activity (2019-2024) that provides Missions with cybersecurity experts that can develop active cybersecurity measures to protect Mission activities.	Maurice Kent (COR)	mkent@usaid.gov
Agent Network Strengthening (ePayments)	ANS is a six-year (2016-2022) activity that focuses on the integration of digital financial services into USAID programming. It provides expertise to Missions on how digital financial services can be integrated into agriculture, education, health, and humanitarian programming.	Paul Nelson (AOR)	pnelson@usaid.gov

DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM FUND

This internal fund equips Missions with catalytic funding to design and implement activities that foster open, inclusion, and secure digital ecosystems. The fund supports two types of interventions:



Emergent opportunities to harness or shape the digital ecosystem in any sector



Strategic initiatives to strengthen or improve the digital ecosystem

In March 2020, CDD facilitated a beta-launch of the Digital Ecosystem Fund. Despite an accelerated timeline, the fund received 21 proposals spanning all sectors and from Missions across three regions. Of those proposals, six Missions received funding. For additional information please reach out to Paul Nelson, pnelson@usaid.gov.