

# Digital Health Investment Checklist

*Key considerations for more equitable and accountable investment to advance Universal Health Coverage*

The Digital Health Investment (DHI) Checklist is a set of **questions to consider when designing and making investment decisions** to help ensure these are equitable, sustainable, and support the goal of universal health coverage (UHC). It outlines key **strategic considerations** (part A) and **priority investment areas** (part B) that digital health investments should consider.

The DHI Checklist emphasises the need for investments to take a person-centred approach to ensure that digital health investments are grounded in equity and human rights, respond to community needs, and ultimately support UHC. The guiding questions go beyond technology, to include the other enabling factors needed to maximise the benefits of digital health transformation, including the need for investments to contribute to sustainable and resilient health systems, digital public infrastructure, improved data governance, and a culture of data use to create meaningful impact.

The Checklist sets out guiding questions to consider when:

1. Making funding decisions
2. Assessing funding
3. Advocating for improved funding
4. Holding funders accountable for how their funding is spent

The primary audience for this Checklist is funders of digital health transformation and interventions, including governments, donors, global health initiatives and implementers, private sector investors and implementers, and public procurement decision makers. It is also a tool for those advocating for and supporting improved investment.

The Checklist aims to complement (rather than duplicate) other existing tools and resources in the digital health ecosystem, e.g., the WHO Digital Implementation Investment Guide (DIIG) and the Digital Health Investment Review Tool (DHIRT, currently being updated), which provide more granular inputs on selecting, costing, and implementing digital health interventions and architecture. We encourage users to use this Checklist in concert with these other tools and the Principles of Donor Alignment for Digital Health.

## Part A: Strategic Considerations to Guide Investment

### + Supporting UHC goals

- Will the investment serve as a cross-functional enabler and accelerator to achieving UHC by 2030?
- Does the investment contribute to broader health system strengthening goals?
- Are mechanisms in place to track and evaluate the impact of health outcomes and health system performance?

### + Equity & Inclusion

- Does the investment improve health equity, especially for marginalised populations (including key populations, indigenous communities, remote areas, etc.)?
- Is it designed with communities and end-users at the centre (i.e., person-centred) to be accessible, affordable, and tailored to meet the needs of underserved populations?
- Does it consider and/or address gender gaps and barriers? Is the investment gender responsive and/or does it take a gender-transformative approach?
- Is it grounded in and upholds human rights?

### + Alignment & Coordination

- Does the investment align with and support a national (or sub-national, where relevant) digital health strategy and priorities (e.g., costed national digital health strategy, digital transformation roadmap, UHC strategy, etc.)?
- Is there a mechanism in place to track and coordinate resources for digital health, and does this investment contribute to that mechanism (e.g., donor coordination forum, resource mobilisation plan, gap in the healthcare market)?
- Is your investment well-coordinated with other investments to reduce duplication or redundancy?

### + Sustainability

- Is there a strategy for ensuring the long-term sustainability of digital health investments beyond initial funding cycles?
- Is there a plan to co-fund or to transition from donor to domestic public and private resources for long-term financial sustainability?
- Does the investment take into account its impact on the environment and climate?

### + Scalability

- Are solutions designed with scalability in mind to accommodate future growth and expansion?
- Are existing national digital public infrastructure and architectures leveraged and integrated to enable interoperability and scaling?
- Does the investment contribute to the digital health ecosystem by aligning to standards for semantic and technical interoperability?
- Does the investment prioritise digital global public goods, open standards, and interoperable systems instead of standalone systems?

### + Localisation & Learning

- Are efforts made to build local capacity and ownership for the development, implementation, and maintenance?
- Does the investment contribute to or cultivate a culture of data use throughout the health sector?

## Part B: Priority Investment Areas

- Does the investment prioritise at least one of the following investment areas<sup>1</sup>?
  - Leadership and governance
  - Strategy and investment
  - Services and applications
  - Standards and interoperability
  - Digital connectivity and Infrastructure
  - Legislation, regulation, standards policy and compliance
  - Workforce
  - Data use ecosystem
  - Change management
  - Surveillance and response systems
  - Digital financial systems and transactions
  - Digital supply chain management
- Does a percentage of your investment support foundational areas, such as digital public infrastructure, leadership and governance, workforce capacity?
- Is the investment aligned to the Health Data Governance Principles<sup>2</sup>?

<sup>1</sup> These priority investment areas are based on the [WHO/ITU ehealth building blocks](#), [PATH/CooperSmith Data Use Acceleration and Learning \(DUAL\) initiative](#), and [Transform Health's report "Closing the digital divide: More and better funding for the digital transformation of health"](#). **These investment areas may be updated based on revisions to global best practice or global guidance, to respond to the evolving digital health ecosystem.**

<sup>2</sup> <https://healthdataprinciples.org/>

## Appendix. Example Use Cases for the Checklist

- **Evaluating New Investments:** Assess proposed digital health interventions to ensure alignment with strategic priorities. Identify potential gaps or areas for improvement before committing resources.
- **Portfolio Evaluation:** Use the Checklist to review and assess an organisation's entire digital health funding portfolio.
- **Informing Funding Decisions:** Guide decision-making on allocating resources to digital health projects.
- **Advocacy Tool:** Advocate with governments and funders to priorities the investment areas to strengthen the enabling environment. Advocate for increased budget allocations for digital health, prioritising the areas outlined in the Checklist. Use the Checklist to guide budget proposals submitted by the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Finance.
- **Accountability Tool:** Use in advocacy to hold decision makers accountable for meeting the needs of communities and end-users in their investment decisions. Track investments against commitments made, e.g., on equity, sustainability, interoperability, gender, UHC, etc.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Apply the Checklist as a framework for tracking and reporting on the effectiveness of digital health investments, ensuring alignment with intended outcomes.
- **Planning and Coordination:** Support donors and implementing partners in coordinating investments to avoid fragmentation or duplication. Use as a set of guidelines for donor or external funding.
- **Strategy Development:** Help governments or organisations develop or refine digital health strategies by identifying missing elements in strategic or costed plans.
- **Procurement and Vendor Engagement:** Provide feedback to potential vendors on how their proposals align with national digital health priorities and the Checklist's criteria. Ensure vendor-provided solutions are equitable, interoperable, and aligned with sustainability goals.
- **Capacity Building:** Use the Checklist as a training tool to enhance understanding of strategic investment areas among government officials, funders, and implementing partners.
- **Tailored Adaptation:** Customise the Checklist for specific use cases, such as digital health solutions for frontline workers, climate-resilient health systems, or sub-national strategies. Adapt the Checklist for private sector audiences.