

Development Gateway

An IREX Venture

FY2023-2025 Strategic Plan



A Moment of Inflection for Digital Development

As the world has grappled with the COVID-19 global pandemic, the interconnectedness of its 8 billion people has never been clearer, with endless opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and change. In parallel, the pitfalls of years of decaying trust in institutions have impacted public health, economic recovery, and social equity. While many governments are seeking to deeply engage and support their constituents, elsewhere authoritarianism has been on the rise, with many governments increasingly using digital approaches to misinform and surveil populations, and data to target vulnerable populations. Against this backdrop of advances and challenges, the world's largest youth population has the opportunity to bring vibrancy to government and society through civic engagement, innovation, and entrepreneurship or to foment instability due to poor educational opportunities and high unemployment. The need for global and regional collaboration and effective and trustworthy leadership at the national and local levels is stark, and the role of technology and data in supporting these trends is both promising and unassured.

Today's digital agenda also presents a unique combination of opportunities and threats. The same technologies that can support better targeting of fertilizer subsidies using machine learning and satellite imagery can be used to support land grabs and targeting of marginalized communities by repressive regimes. Hope that the internet and social media would democratize knowledge and bring us closer together has been, at least in the present, overtaken by a reality of divided communities and barriers to knowledge and opportunity. Algorithms intended to support more efficient decision-making can become sources of biased and unequal resource allocation. Access to digital technology has expanded, but the digital divide remains a source of inequality driven by political, social, and economic factors such as access to power and resources, gender, and group identity. These paradoxes of digital potential have only accelerated in recent years throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, we have reached a moment in digital development where public-serving institutions can do more with technology than ever before, but are often less trusted than ever to do so in just, equitable, and efficient ways. As we have learned time and time again, while technology is nominally neutral, the context and design of its implementation and deployment are anything but.

In this context of a crisis of digital trust, Development Gateway: An IREX Venture's (DG's) Mission is more important than ever: ***We support the use of data, technology, and evidence to create more effective, responsive, and trusted institutions.***

For more than two decades, DG has supported governments — at both national and local levels — and civil society to thoughtfully deploy technology in ways that are sustainable and impactful. We have partnered with communities and individual changemakers to tackle urgent problems, such as identifying high quality schools in informal settlements or galvanizing government action on

behind-schedule public works, and by supporting them to innovate and create approaches and tools that help them address those problems through trusted, well-governed data and digital development initiatives. **We go beyond the technical questions to understand the politics, institutional mandates, management culture, and individual incentives that shape the context that determines the success or failure of data and digital programming.**

Recognizing that the growing demand for our work far exceeded our size and ability to deliver, in 2021, DG entered into a strategic partnership with IREX, becoming an IREX Venture and joining forces with a larger, global, mission-aligned nonprofit with a 50+ year history of supporting more just, prosperous, and inclusive societies. This partnership represents a transformational opportunity to rapidly expand DG's impact, while maintaining our quality, creativity, and contextualized approach to data and digital development. We will leverage our combined talent and strengths to address problems such as underperforming educational institutions, marginalized youth, and distrust in public institutions and media. We will partner with communities in new regions such as Central America and Eastern Europe while embracing new approaches such as digital advisory services and responsibly piloting emerging technology which can greatly accelerate and scale up our impact. By mainstreaming our approaches and skills into IREX's work and partnerships, we will become exponentially more relevant to pressing issues of our time and leverage learning to shape the thinking of our donors and partners.

Together with IREX, DG will expand its role as a global leader in both data and digital for development, working toward a digital development agenda that builds trust between institutions and the constituents they serve. This strategy lays the foundation for how we will achieve that vision.

Overview of the Strategy

Guiding Principles

Vision

We envision a world where public-serving institutions are inclusive, responsive to the needs of their constituents, accountable, and effective in targeting and delivering services that improve lives.

Mission

We support the use of data, digital technology, and evidence to create more effective, responsive, inclusive, and trusted public-serving institutions.

Approach

- We partner with public-serving institutions to support their efforts to deliver on their mission by better use of digital technology and data
- Through digital technology and data, we catalyze higher performance, greater responsiveness and transparency of public-serving institutions
- We build trust: when public-serving institutions are accountable, effective, and inclusive, they engender greater trust from their constituents

Methods



Design

Using human-centered principles to co-design with end users, we design technical tools and programs that meet the needs of public-serving institutions in transparently and efficiently delivering services.



Build

Implementing scalable technologies that intuitively aggregate data and make information accessible. We create open source tools, including flagship open source solutions (e.g., Aid Management Platform, DG Toolkit, OC Explorer). We support data interoperability and generate tools with user-friendly interfaces that support data use and informed decision-making.



Advise

DG has perspective as on-the-ground project implementers, a background as strategic advisors, and occupies a trusted space in the global policy arena. We offer a blend of expertise that uniquely positions us to help support and shape institutional digital strategy and global data policy.



Learn & Share

Over 20 years of experience has shown us that technology alone cannot solve the world's trickiest problems. We take a collaboration, learning, and adaptation lens in all of our work, and value sharing back what we have learned in overcoming barriers and challenges to implementing sustainable, well-governed digital and data ecosystems.

Thematic Focus Areas



Delivery

Agriculture, Education, Health

Supporting the targeting and delivery of public services



Governance

Open Contracting, Extractives

Supporting transparent governance and combatting disinformation



Strategy

Supporting public-serving institutions in designing digital and data strategies that help fulfill their missions



Inclusive Engagement

Youth and Gender

In collaboration with our strategic partners at IREX

Focus Areas Overview

To achieve our organizational objectives, we will work in **Delivery** (in Agriculture, Education, and Health), **Governance** (in public financial management and combating disinformation), **Strategy** (institutional digital and data strategy development), and **Inclusive Engagement**.

Delivery: Agriculture, Education, Health

Agriculture

We will support policymakers, private sector value chain actors, and (indirectly) smallholder farmers through the creation of data systems to monitor agricultural inputs and results, the design of digital agricultural approaches, and information on crop value chains, markets, and climate change adaptation. We will inform the global policy discussions on food security, agricultural transformation, and digital agriculture with insights from our work.

Health

We will provide the Tobacco Control community with data to inform policy and combat tobacco industry interference and support administrative data on health at the country level.

Education

We will improve data interoperability and availability for policymakers, researchers, and administrators in the education system. We will create stronger linkages between country systems and global policy and resourcing decisions on learning loss, remote learning, and outcome measurement.



Delivery Impact

We will support 20+ government ministries and 10+ subnational governments in using digital and data to better target, deliver, and monitor services. We will capture and share stories and evidence to highlight the impact of this work.



Governance: Public Financial Management and Combatting Disinformation

Public Financial Management

We will build tools and programs that drive more transparent and efficient aid coordination, public procurement, and natural resource management. We will continue to drive global policy conversations on aid effectiveness and public finance transparency.

Disinformation

We will combat disinformation through the use of emerging research and technology, including data science, and information and data literacy skill development.



Governance Impact

We will support 10+ ministries and 10+ subnational governments to better monitor their public financial management in aid, procurement, and natural resource management. We will develop new tools and methods to identify and combat disinformation in social and formal media and government messaging. Jointly with IREX, we will define indicators to monitor the impact of these disinformation countering tools.



Strategy: Data Strategy Design and Implementation, Digital Strategy Design and Implementation, Advising on Emerging Technology Selection and Deployment

Digital and Data Strategy

We will support public-serving institutions in designing holistic **digital** and **data strategies** that align systems, policies, personnel, and practices with institutional mandates and objectives. We explore the technical and political factors as well as the individual incentives that make up organizational ecosystems and design actionable, achievable, and relevant paths toward the strategic use of digital and data. We will inform global policy conversations on results and organizational data and digital strategies.

System Architecture and Engineering

We will provide expertise in systems architecture and engineering, digital governance, and human-centered design research to advise on the ethical, effective, and context-appropriate use of emerging technology in development programs. We will take the lessons that we learn to move forward the global policy dialogue on data and digital governance and "leapfrogging" innovation.



Strategy Impact

We will support 4+ development agencies in developing new digital and/or data strategies, informing >\$100m in new investments. We will lead 10+ country digital/data ecosystem assessments, informing an additional >\$30m in new investments.



Inclusive Engagement: Gender and Youth

Identity-based inequities are obstacles to development at all levels of society.

Identity-based inequities are obstacles to development at all levels of society. To address these inequities, we will consistently mainstream gender, equity, and social inclusion (GESI) in all of our work. We will seek specific programmatic opportunities on gender data and the gender digital divide: supporting public-serving institutions to more effectively use data and digital tools to address gender issues and supporting the development of skills and access to digital employment of women and non-binary persons. We will align our efforts with IREX's GESI initiative.

Youth are critical to the achievement of digital transformation and data-informed governance. There are about 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 in the world today—the largest youth population ever. Currently, half of the world's young people live on the African continent. The population, particularly in East and West Africa, presents an unparalleled opportunity to support change through inclusion of youth in digital governance. Within each of the priority areas above, we will seek out and implement activities with a specific focus on youth. Our focus on youth aligns with IREX's goal of engaging youth to strengthen their leadership skills, workforce readiness, and civic participation. Data and digital development will accelerate the advancement of this goal.



Inclusive Engagement Impact

We will support at least 5 ministries and/or subnational governments in developing gender-focused data/digital strategies or investments. We will actively monitor our efforts in mainstreaming gender into all of our work, and share our progress. We will support at least 5 ministries and/or subnational governments in developing youth-focused data/digital strategies or investments.



Methods We Will Deploy



Design

We use these methods to i) support partners in designing programming and technology to be developed independently and ii) inform the design of our own tools and projects.

- Needs assessments
- System architecture
- Program design
- Emerging technology research and implementation design
- Data sharing and data governance process design



Build

We use these methods when implementing software systems and data interoperability programs.

- Open source software
- Management Information Systems
- Dashboards
- Mobile applications and data collection tools
- Emerging technology implementation
- System integration
- Data interoperability
- Training and capacity building
- Program management and implementation
- Data collection and filling data gaps
- Research implementation and oversight



Advise

We use these methods when supporting partners in developing strategic approaches to using digital and data in their organizational missions.

- Strategy development
- Change management
- Data and digital governance implementation
- Emerging technology governance and evaluation



Learn & Share

We use these methods in all of our work, ensuring that we actively contribute to the digital development policy dialogue.

- Collaboration, learning, and adaptation (CLA)
- Applied research
- Policy engagement and publications
- Policy and programmatic recommendations on emerging technology

Approach to Emerging Technologies and Innovation

DG will increase its engagement in developing and deploying emerging technologies that are quickly changing our context, with an emphasis on sustainability, ethical innovation, and strong digital governance. We will build on our culture of evidence and experimentation, engaging in new tools with a focus on learning and knowledge sharing. We will help governments and civil society distinguish between positive disruption and hype by focusing on problems identified by the communities we aim to support and on how those communities want to solve them.

Our role in researching, prototyping, and implementing emerging and experimental technology is to:

1. support public-serving institutions and communities in shaping their own solutions to the problems they encounter;
2. ensure the best-possible implementation, designed with intended users;
3. capture learning and evidence on relative impact and cost-effectiveness;
4. identify and communicate ethical concerns and ensure coherence with DG's Mission and Values; and
5. suggest paths forward for the digital development sector, including recommendations to replicate, scale, adapt, or sunset the use of the technology in question, keeping a balance between agility and reliability.

We bring decades of experience in designing, architecting, developing, and deploying enterprise-level software with dozens of governments, development agencies, and civil society organizations globally. We also maintain a mission-driven focus on ensuring the ethical, sustainable, and impactful use of technology. Together, this makes DG uniquely positioned to lead the digital development sector in the thoughtful implementation of new tools and approaches – a role that we intend to expand upon as both an implementer and a digital advisory service through this strategy.



Geographic Focus

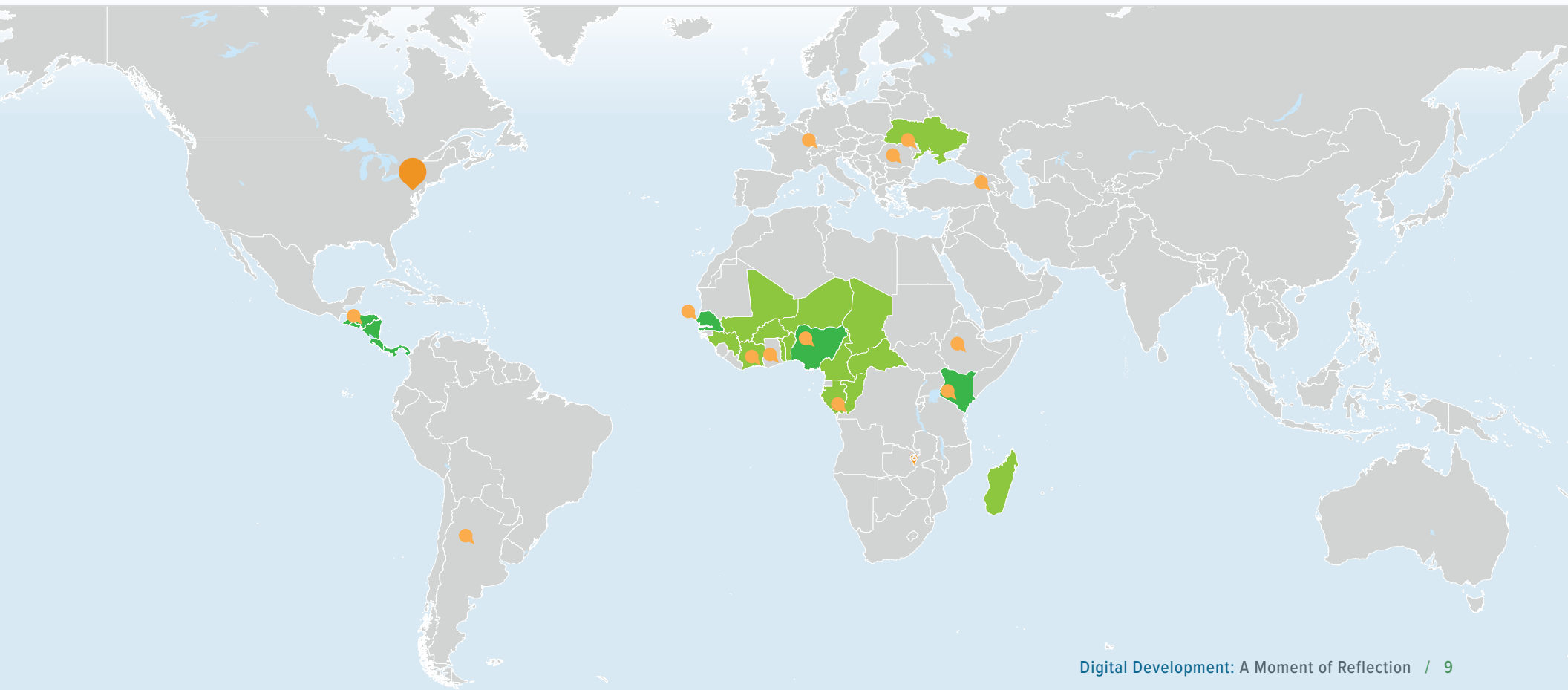
To accelerate greater impact, we will expand our geographical footprint through our strategic relationship with IREX by marrying our organizational strengths and locations with emerging business opportunities, focusing on key regions where we project the greatest likelihood to bring about lasting results, and by actively seeking partnerships with local changemaker organizations. We will explore regional or local fundraising hubs and social enterprise models.

As a mission-driven organization, we will be driven by our mission and our ability to deliver impact in all the geographic choices we make. While we will remain flexible and problem-driven in choosing the locations where we advance our impact, we will prioritize addressing major problems in the use of data in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America.

Dark Green - **Tier 1:** Geographies where DG will actively seek to build out teams, proactively engage with local partners and donor community, and prioritize new work and grant-funded initiatives.

Light Green - **Tier 2:** Geographies where DG will opportunistically hire team members to work on programs and scan for and bid on mission-aligned opportunities.

Map Pins - Global Team



Implementing This Strategy Will Require:

Funding

- Double the funding available toward achieving our Mission by FY25, while maintaining a diversified set of funders (US Government, philanthropy, UN agencies, and other bilaterals) and funding types (grants, contracts, cooperative agreements)
- Maximize the potential of the IREX partnership through joint positioning for and pursuit of opportunities
- Work through a blend of direct implementation of initiatives (80%) and design and advisory (20%) activities

Human Capital and Innovation

- Expand our team's skills and capabilities through a combination of improved professional development approaches, internal growth, and expansion. Develop and update a talent strategy that ensures we are building the right capabilities for emerging needs
- Expand our work with emerging technologies, by focusing on a deep understanding of problems and the stakeholders involved in solving them and supporting them in selecting, designing, and governing new digital technologies
- Identify and maximize opportunities to share talent between DG and IREX, supporting cross-team learning and cohesion
- Strengthen internal innovation and learning processes to track impact stories and to continuously leverage data and evidence to improve program impact

Organizational Development and Systems

- Increase investment in human resources/people function, improving performance management
- Continuously expand use of internal data in decision-making and learning

Culture

- Maintain an organizational culture of trust and creativity and a learning-focused environment that values all team members and supports their lives outside of work
- Continuously invest in team well-being and work-life balance, maintaining DG as a supportive and flexible place to work that allows team members to thrive personally and professionally
- Expand on our existing agile approach to build a culture of informed risk-taking, honest assessment of results, and adaptive innovation



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