Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation

A primer for conducting principles-focused evaluations of the Principles for Digital Development
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Background

The Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL) at the United Nations Foundation was founded to help the most marginalized people benefit from technology. Toward that end, one of DIAL’s roles is to serve as the official steward of the Principles for Digital Development, a set of generally accepted, overarching, operational, and effectiveness principles for utilizing technology in development programs. The Digital Principles have more than 240 endorsers across the digital development ecosystem. As the steward of the Digital Principles, DIAL manages a community of practice, and develops and disseminates support, training, and advocacy materials to help organizations apply the Principles to their Information and Communications Technology for Development (ICT4D) portfolios.

Recently, DIAL and others have been considering how to provide endorsers with more design, monitoring, evaluation, and learning resources to encourage adoption of the Principles and improved programming within the digital ecosystem. For DIAL, this has included supporting the drafting of a conceptual MEL framework, disseminating case study templates for signatories to self-assess and report their efforts toward applying the Principles, and, most recently, developing a maturity matrix with TechChange to be used in formative proposal evaluations by both digital service providers and donors to ensure greater quality in the bidding and contracting process. Other actors within the ecosystem have utilized the Digital Principles as an evaluative mechanism for organizations and projects, including a Digital Principles fidelity audit by IntraHealth; the development of another proposal review instrument, the Digital Health Investment Review Tool, led by USAID; and a practitioner crowdsourced evaluation checklist for digital development projects using artificial intelligence.

DIAL has also been working on a suite of resources that fall under the auspices of broad principles-focused evaluative work. The first is the development of a bank of common metrics, similar to the IRIS+ metrics, informed by the Principles for organizations to select off-the-shelf, standardized indicators to use in their programming. The second is a series of whitepapers and knowledge products that invite the ICT4D community to consider the relevance of other best practices not currently captured in the Digital Principles, such as those around data responsibility, gender, and downward accountability to local communities. The third is a self-assessment accountability tool, like a B-Corp rating system, that organizations can use to measure generic engagement with and organizational uptake of the Principles framework, but not of specific principles themselves.

While DIAL has been supporting and developing principles-informed evaluation resources and activities, a well-organized, parallel, and independent effort led by evaluation thought-leader Michael Quinn Patton has been developing a model of evaluation practice that seeks to evaluate principles and principles-based social change initiatives: principles-focused evaluation (P-FE). This evaluation guide is intended to bridge these efforts and serve as a guide for principles-driven practitioners, specifically those who are within or working alongside Digital Principles-endorsing organizations, to apply P-FE to the Digital Principles. As such, much of the material herein is a customized distillation of Patton’s 2018 book *Principles-Focused Evaluation: The Guide* coupled with other evaluation conceptual frameworks applied to evaluating the Principles for Digital Development. After an initial introduction to P-FE and Digital Principles-focused evaluation (DP-FE), guidance on how to implement DP-FE will be

1 http://simlab.org/resources/mandeoftech/
2 https://digitalprinciples.org/resource/case-study-template/
5 https://digitalprinciples.org/resource/digital-health-investment-review-tool-dhir/
6 https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TkMU3ifZlWY2tws9wvCBDAuRwMf7z23Xl_COfJZrlUo/edit#heading=h.92I7557796c7
7 https://iris.theorin.org/
8 (insert link for DP Common Metrics)
9 (insert link for Principles +)
10 https://bcorporation.net/
12 https://www.utilization-focusedevaluation.org/principles-focused-evaluation
13 https://www.guilford.com/books/Principles-Focused-Evaluation/Michael-Quinn-Patton/9781462531820
Principles-Focused Evaluation

Principles-focused evaluation is a new prescriptive evaluation model within the utilization-focused evaluation (U-FE) approach. Recognizing that organizations and change initiatives are turning more and more to principles to guide action in the face of complex challenges, P-FE "examines (1) whether principles are clear, meaningful, and actionable, and if so, (2) whether they are actually being followed and, if so, (3) whether they are leading to desired results." In short, P-FE looks to evaluate the meaningfulness, adherence, and results of effectiveness principles in action.

While there are many types of principles, including professional, research, and policymaking principles, two types of principles are important to clarify the nature of P-FE. Moral principles tell us what is right, and effectiveness principles tell us what works. P-FE is a framework for evaluating effectiveness principles. The basic premise of P-FE is that principles can and should be evaluated, because until they are, they are merely hypotheses. Where processes, projects, and outcomes are the objects of process, project, and outcomes-focused evaluations respectively, principles are the object, or evaluand, of P-FE. In P-FE, principles are not the evaluation criteria, but instead the object of evaluation. This may seem counter-intuitive for organizations that want to gain insights into how and how well their Digital Principles-based programs are doing. However, just as theory-based evaluation (TBE) seeks to evaluate the merit of program theory by examining that theory in practice, P-FE seeks to evaluate the merit of effectiveness principles by examining those principles in practice.

Working Logic of Principles-Focused Evaluation

While all evaluations seek to combine values and evidence to make evaluative claims, different evaluation approaches and models attempt to resolve different real-world issues that evaluations face. Exhibit 1 offers a summary of the distinguishing features of P-FE by describing its working logic.

EXHIBIT 1: Working Logic of P-FE

| Challenge: How to provide feedback about principles-based initiatives navigating complexity | Phenomena: Effectiveness principles as an intervention | Question: To what extent are principles meaningful, adhered to, and yield desired outcomes? | Claim: Significance, adherence, and effectiveness |

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14 https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/faq-principles-focused-evaluation
15 https://www.utilization-focusedevaluation.org/our-approach
16 Patton, 2018a, page 3
17 See Appendix II for further clarification between TOC and principles frameworks.
The Principles Guiding Principles-Focused Evaluation

As no one evaluation activity is the same, it’s no surprise that P-FE is itself undergirded by effectiveness principles intended to guide stakeholders through the process. The following are the principles that guide P-FE. As principles are not rules, these principles, like the Digital Principles, should be viewed as sensitizing concepts that need to be interpreted and applied contextually but manifest in some degree to be considered a quality P-FE.

| Matching | Conduct P-FEs on principles-driven initiatives with principles-committed people. Principles are the evaluand (i.e., the focus of the evaluation). |
| Distinctions matter | Distinguish types of principles (i.e., natural, moral, or effectiveness: overarching or operational); distinguish principles from values, beliefs, lessons, rules, and proverbs. |
| Quality | Support the development of principles that meet the GUIDE criteria. |
| Evaluation rigor | Systematically inquire into and evaluate the effectiveness of principles for both implementation (whether they are followed) and results (whether they make a difference). |
| Utilization focus | Focus on intended use by intended users from beginning to end, facilitating the evaluation process to ensure utility and actual use. |
| Beyond rhetoric | Support using principles comprehensively; using them or losing them; not letting them become just a list; and applying them across functions like staff development, strategic planning, and MEL work. |
| Interconnections | The eight principles of P-FE are an interdependent, interconnected whole, not a pick-and-choose list. |
| Learning | Reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the P-FE process and results to learn and improve; engage in principles-focused reflective practice. |

Key Premises of Principles-Focused Evaluation

- Principles are the primary way of navigating complexity.
- Principles can and should be evaluated.
- Principles are the object of P-FE.
- P-FE can improve principles-based initiatives.

19 See Appendix I that explains how quality principles Guide; are Useful, Inspire; support Developmental adaptations, and are Evaluable.
Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation

Digital Principles-focused evaluation is a specific application of P-FE to the Principles of Digital Development. It means that the Digital Principles are the object of the evaluation and insights about the meaningfulness, adherence, and results of these principles can guide endorser organizations as they implement Digital Principles-based initiatives in service of their respective digital development strategies. P-FE evaluates effectiveness principles. Therefore, it can be used to evaluate the Digital Principles, since they are effectiveness principles for digital development. Of effectiveness principles, they may be closer to what Patton calls overarching rather than operational principles, though there is variation among them. For example, Build for Sustainability is closer to overarching, while Use Open Standards, Open Data, Open Source, and Open Innovation is closer to operational. Regardless, the various explanations, guidance, and prescriptions that follow and are associated with each principle bring out the operational aspect of these principles. This distinction is important as organizations consider the evaluability of these principles and begin to investigate questions of significance of and adherence to principles. For further ideas on how principles are operationalized and adhered to, see the Digital Principles Indicator Library and guidance document.

While many P-FEs are carried out by organizations using their own idiosyncratic or specific effectiveness principles, using DP-FE to evaluate the generally accepted Digital Principles has an important precedent. The initial idea for this P-FE was informed in part by a joint evaluation of the implementation of generally accepted development principles in the Paris Declaration. As Patton explains, “the evaluation of the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness is the largest, most comprehensive, and most complex P-FE conducted to date” and won the American Evaluation Association’s Outstanding Evaluation Award in 2012. Many of the lessons from meta-evaluating that joint evaluation informed the development of P-FE, and, as such, developing guidance for evaluating the Digital Principles can be viewed as a homecoming for P-FE.

Applying P-FE to generally accepted principles like the Digital Principles means certain aspects of the model may need to be adapted. While these distinctions will become more apparent as endorsers conduct their own DP-FEs, one is immediately apparent. While the Digital Principles are intended to be living guidance, unlike internal organizational principles, they cannot be modified or refined unilaterally by any one endorsing organization before conducting a DP-FE following evaluability assessments. However, findings shared by endorsers from DP-FE evaluations about the meaningfulness of Digital Principles at their organizations, which use the same GUIDE criteria in the evaluability/situational assessment, as well as the effects of adherence, will be critical feedback mechanisms informing the ongoing stewardship of the Digital Principles as living principles that evolve with new evidence. Accordingly, while evaluability assessments can and should include questions about the quality of the overarching Digital Principles for that organization using the GUIDE framework to share back with DIAL, they should be primarily focused on understanding and planning for the factors that may affect the quality of a DP-FE at that organization.

20 For ease of reading and lack of confusion, P-FE and DP-FE will be used as shorthand for the two evaluation models, and “the Principles” or “Digital Principles” will be used for the Principles for Digital Development, as opposed to lowercase principles when referring to principles generally.
21 See Exhibits 9.2; 17.1; 29.3; 30.2; 31.3 and chapter 17 in Patton 2018a for further clarification between overarching and operational principles.
22 https://digitalprinciples.org/digital-principles-indicator-library
23 Patton, 2018a, p. 228
24 See chapter 25 from Patton 2018a for a description and lessons from the P-FE of the Paris Declaration.
Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation Questions

While focusing the priority of P-FE questions is covered in phase 7 of the methodology section, the following are the three minimum evaluation questions a DP-FE should examine:

1. **Meaningfulness**: To what extent and in what ways are the Principles for Digital Development meaningful to our organization or initiative?

2. **Adherence**: If meaningful, to what extent and in what ways are the Principles for Digital Development adhered to in practice at our organization or initiative?

3. **Results**: If adhered to, to what extent and in what ways are the Principles for Digital Development leading to desired results?

**“Principles-focused evaluation evaluates the meaningfulness of principles, the degree of adherence to avowed principles, and the results that follow from adherence”**

Utilization of Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation

P-FE, and by extension DP-FE, are types of evaluation models within the family or approach of utilization-focused evaluation. As such, special emphasis is on designing and conducting the evaluation in ways that promote intended use for intended users, similar to the *Design With the User* principle. While concrete actions for promoting evaluation use are shared in the methodology section, introducing two main types and three sub-types of evaluation use (and misuse) will help DP-FE evaluators foster intended use for intended users. *Findings use* is what we typically associate with evaluation utilization: delivering an evaluation report with findings and possibly recommendations that will be acted on by decision-makers to help their programs navigate complex challenges. While this type of use is hoped for, it is not guaranteed, and it often follows another type of use. *Process use* refers to how evaluation activities, or the act of being involved in an evaluation, affect individuals and organizations, often manifest in organizational procedures or culture. Both types of use, *findings use* and *process use*, can have consequences for behaviors, called *instrumental use*, or for thinking, called *conceptual use*.

There are two more sub-types of use, or more appropriately misuse, that DP-FE evaluators should be mindful of. *Symbolic use* occurs when a DP-FE is commissioned as a political show, a public relations campaign, or to placate stakeholders and delay meaningful action. Another form of DP-FE misuse is called *legitimative use*, commissioning evaluations to justify decisions already made. DP-F evaluators should be mindful of these types of use and misuse when working with stakeholders to design and conduct DP-FE.

A final note about evaluation use is important for fielding a common concern when beginning a DP-FE. When introducing the concept of DP-FE, MEL practitioners might hear decision-makers say something like, “Yes, we have endorsed the Digital Principles, but we haven’t done enough to apply them to warrant a DP-FE. We should wait a couple years until we have applied the Principles more intentionally.” Any organization that endorses the Digital Principles can and should conduct a DP-FE,

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25 Additional evaluation questions and sub-questions can be coupled with these.

26 Patton, 2018a, p. 3.

27 For more in-depth descriptions of these use types, see the series on evaluation use by Alkin and King (2016, 2017, 2019).
regardless of how far along they are in their path to applying the Digital Principles. First, the initial evaluation question of meaningfulness of the Digital Principles to the organization is not predicated on application. Second, it is possible that existing policies and procedures manifest adherence to the Principles, while not explicitly claiming to. Third, even if manifest adherence to the Digital Principles is little to nonexistent, the third essential evaluation question in DP-FE can look at the consequences of not applying the Digital Principles in practice. As DP-FE can be used formatively, all of this baseline information can serve to foster meaningful formative findings use for organizations. Finally, as in the evaluation of the Paris Declaration, where the act of being involved in the evaluation focused attention on the principles, purposes, and effects of the declaration itself among signatories, conducting a DP-FE, especially within organizations just starting their journey to move beyond rhetoric, can lead to the process use of further sensitization to how meaningful, adhered to, or impactful the Digital Principles are or can be at their organization.

Key Points of Use in Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation

- Design and conduct DP-FE for intended use by intended users.
- Process use can enhance findings use.
- Process use is more effective if it is explicit, intentional, and purposeful.
- Process use for DP-FE has the value of adding significant depth of engagement with principles among those involved in the evaluation.

Methodology

DP-FE and P-FE are new types of evaluation models. However, fostering evaluation use is not new and not unfamiliar to MEL professionals, nor are many of the premises, purposes, and methods employed through the process of DP-FE. As DP-FE is a form of U-FE, it does command a high degree of facilitation skills and clarity about the logic of evaluative reasoning. To that end, this section presents two key operational frameworks for applying DP-FE. The first is a 10-phase process for facilitating a DP-FE, including mostly prefigurative, ongoing, and follow-up facilitative work for convening intended users in determining and facilitating intended use and making key decisions about the evaluation purpose, design, and methods. Like U-FE, DP-FE is methods agnostic, meaning the best methods are those positioned to answer the evaluation questions to promote intended use by intended users. This 10-phase framework adapted and distilled from the P-FE checklist is presented as a simplified and linear process that is helpful for proposing, planning, and managing DP-FE and being sensitized to the work involved in each step. However, the P-FE process in the real world is hardly ever linear and sequential, so this framework should function as a high-level overview and not necessarily an operational straitjacket. The second framework presented in this section is a six-step process for evaluative reasoning applied to the DP-FE process. It is adapted from the general logic of evaluation and generic steps in evaluation reasoning. It is included for its explicit articulation of evaluation-specific methodology procedure, not just the general facilitation methods needed to promote intended use by intended users.

Any organization that endorses the Digital Principles can and should conduct a DP-FE, regardless of how far along they are in their path to applying the Digital Principles.

“Learning by doing. Principles-focused evaluators will have to adapt to each P-FE situation and learn by engaging and adapting in that context.”

28 Patton, 2018a, p. 369.
29 See Exhibit 36.1 from Patton 2018a for a more detailed checklist of the ten steps to P-FE.
30 See Exhibit 23.1 from Patton, 2018a, pp. 204-205.
31 Scriven, 1980; Fournier, 1996.
10 Phases of Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation

This is a distillation from the P-FE checklist Patton offers at the end of his 2018 text. Premises for effectiveness and facilitation have been distilled and included in the general methodology section, though many were left out completely for sake of brevity. As with the rest of this primer intended to sensitize MEL practitioners and decision-makers at Digital Principles-endorsing organizations, this checklist is intended to provide a scope of the DP-FE process. DIAL strongly recommends consulting the source text for P-FE when commissioning and carrying out DP-FEs.

1 PHASE 1. Assess and build program and organizational readiness for Digital Principles-focused evaluation.

PRIMARY TASKS:

1A. Assess the commitment of evaluation commissioners and funders to undertake a DP-FE based on how the Digital Principles guide programming and the principles of P-FE guide evaluation.

1B. Conduct a baseline assessment of past approaches to principles and evaluation use by reviewing important documents, interviewing key stakeholders, and finding out current perceptions about both principles and evaluation generally.

1C. Introduce the GUIDE criteria as a framework within which the DP-FE will be conducted in a launch workshop, video conference call, or event that will involve key stakeholders to assess and build readiness for DP-FE.

1D. Based on the initial experience working with key stakeholders, assess what needs to be done next to further enhance readiness, build capacity, and move the evaluation forward.

RESULTS of phase 1: Primary intended users understand and are committed to DP-FE.

A. Primary intended users understand how principles can guide and make a difference generally.

B. They understand how the Digital Principles are intended to guide and make a difference for endorsers specifically.

C. They understand the GUIDE criteria for effectiveness principles.

D. They are committed and ready to engage in a DP-FE.

2 PHASE 2. Assess and enhance evaluator readiness and competence to undertake a Digital Principles-focused evaluation.

PRIMARY TASKS:

2A. Conduct evaluator self-assessment of general competencies.

2B. Conduct evaluator self-assessment of specialized P-FE knowledge and skills.

2C. Know the Joint Committee’s Program Evaluation standards, OECD criteria, and AEA Guiding Principles.

2D. Assess the match between the evaluator’s substantive knowledge of digital development with what will be needed in the evaluation.

2E. Assess whether a single evaluator or a team is needed, and what combination of competencies will be needed in a team approach.

RESULTS of phase 2: The DP-F evaluator is ready to undertake a DP-FE.

The DP-F evaluator has assessed, understands, and can articulate:

A. General competencies needed and acquired to conduct the evaluation

B. Specialized P-FE knowledge and skills for conducting the evaluation

C. Professional principles that will guide the P-FE and personal principles that make the evaluator principles-driven

D. Appropriate substantive knowledge to do the job, either directly or indirectly, through networking

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33 Patton, 2018a, pp. 366-377
34 See AEA’s competencies: https://www.eval.org/page/competencies.
35 See Patton 2018a
36 https://evaluationstandards.org/program/
PHASE 3. Identify, organize, and engage primary intended users for the DP-FE.

**PRIMARY TASKS:**

3A. Identify and involve primary intended users who are interested, knowledgeable, open, connected to important stakeholder constituencies, credible, teachable, committed, and available for interaction throughout the evaluation process.

3B. Involve intended users throughout all steps of the DP-FE process.

3C. Monitor ongoing availability, interest, and participation of primary intended users to keep the process energized and anticipate turnover of primary intended users.

**RESULTS of phase 3:** The DP-FE is utilization focused.

3A. Primary intended users are identified, engaged, and committed to doing a DP-FE that is utilization focused.

3B. Primary intended users know and are committed to engagement throughout the evaluation, not just at the beginning.

3C. The evaluator and primary intended users have a process for building capacity as needed and for evaluating how the DP-FE is unfolding throughout the process; they are prepared to use feedback and learning to make adjustments as needed.

PHASE 4. Using the GUIDE framework, conduct a Digital Principles-focused situation analysis jointly with primary intended users.

**PRIMARY TASKS:**

4A. The evaluator and primary intended users together examine the evaluability of the Digital Principles in the given context.

4B. Identify contextual factors that will (or may) affect the conduct of the evaluation; be prepared to monitor and deal with those contextual factors.

4C. Attend to both tasks that must be completed and relationship dynamics that support getting tasks done.

**RESULTS of phase 4:** The DP-FE is centered on the GUIDE framework.

4A. An evaluability assessment of the Digital Principles for the given context has been conducted.

4B. Contextual and situational factors that may affect the evaluation have been identified.

4C. The primary intended users and DP-FE evaluator have developed a working relationship that is moving the DP-FE along.

PHASE 5. Identify primary intended uses by establishing the Digital Principles-focused evaluation’s priority purposes.

**PRIMARY TASKS:**

5A. Review alternative purpose options within primary intended users to prioritize the evaluation’s purpose, including improving adherence to the Digital Principles; creating a summative evaluation to render overall judgements about effectiveness of the Principles; meeting accountability demands for compliance with the Principles; monitoring adherence to the Principles; having a developmental approach to DP-FE to adapt the Principles to changing needs and complex contextual dynamics; using DP-FE to generate knowledge (i.e., lessons learned, synthesis of effective patterns across programs).

**RESULTS of phase 5:** The priority purpose and primary intended use of the DP-FE has been determined and agreed on.

5A. Primary intended users understand the importance of having clarity of evaluation purpose.

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37 This step is usually intended to provide the users of P-FE the opportunity to refine and revise internal organizational principles, but as the Principles are generally accepted and not able to be changed unilaterally, this step in DP-FE is focused on the evaluability of the Digital Principles within a given context. Findings about the meaningfulness of the Principles in a given context that result from DP-FEs should be shared publicly and with DIAL to help inform DIAL’s stewardship of the Principles and to ensure they are truly living and are able to adapt to the shifting dynamics of the digital development ecosystem.

38 While this draws on the “Evaluability” criterion (see Patton 2018a pp. 35-36, 220-221) of the GUIDE criteria, and though the other criteria will be used to assess the meaningfulness of the principles in the actual evaluation, a provisional light-touch assessment of the Digital Principles against the GUIDE criteria before a formal and systematic inquiry may reveal limitations that need to be addressed to ensure the success of the evaluation.

39 Refer to Appendix III: Focusing the Options of Evaluation.
PHASE 6. Consider and build in process uses as appropriate.

PRIMARY TASKS:
6A. Review with primary intended users any alternative process use options that are especially relevant to DP-FE, such as infusing evaluative thinking into organizational culture; enhancing shared evaluation understandings; and increasing the skills, knowledge, confidence, self-determination, and sense of ownership among those involved in the evaluation.
6B. Examine the relationship and the interconnections between potential process uses and findings uses.

RESULTS of phase 6: The nature and extent of any process uses have been determined and incorporated into the evaluation process.
6A. Primary intended users understand process use as distinct from but related to findings use.
6B. They understand the relationship and interconnections between potential process uses and findings uses, especially how DP-FE deepens engagement with the Digital Principles.

PHASE 7. Focus on priority Digital Principles-focused evaluation questions relevant to evaluating the Digital Principles.

PRIMARY TASKS:
7A. Review the generic DP-FE about meaningfulness, adherence, and results of the Digital Principles.
7B. Develop additional evaluation questions specific to the evaluation context, primary intended users, and the intended uses of the evaluation.

RESULTS of phase 7: Priority questions focused on the effectiveness of principles have been prioritized.
7A. Generic DP-FE questions have been reviewed and adapted to fit the context of the evaluation and priority information needs of the primary intended users.
7B. Evaluation questions specific to the context and program have been identified and prioritized.

PHASE 8. Negotiate appropriate methods to generate credible findings and support intended use by intended users.

PRIMARY TASKS:
8A. Design the evaluation to answer questions about the meaningfulness of principles, adherence, and the results of adherence.
8B. Employ principles-focused sampling in the DP-FE.
8C. Ensure that the results and the chosen methods are neither overly technical nor overly simplistic and will be able to be used as intended.
8D. Negotiate the trade-offs between design and methods ideals and what can actually be implemented given the inevitable constraints of resources and time.
8E. Render judgements about the effectiveness of principles.

RESULTS of phase 8: An appropriate and credible DP-FE has been designed.
8A. Methods and measures will answer priority questions.
8B. Principles-focused sampling ensures a relevant sample for DP-FE.
8C. The DP-FE design is utilization focused.
8D. The design is realistic.
8E. The design and data will lead to judgements about the effectiveness of the principles being evaluated.

40 See chapter 21 of Patton 2018a.
41 See chapter 22 of Patton 2018a.
PHASE 9. Review the utilization-focused evaluation checklist for data collection, as well as for analysis, reporting, and presentation strategies that enhance use.

PRIMARY TASKS:

9A. Know the research-derived factors that affect evaluation use and apply that knowledge throughout the evaluation.⁴²

RESULTS of phase 9: The DP-FE is used by intended users in intended ways.

9A. Research knowledge about ways to enhance use is applied.

9B. Capacity is built to undertake future DP-FEs.

PHASE 10. Follow up with primary intended users to facilitate and enhance ongoing attention to the principles and ongoing Digital Principles-focused evaluation.

PRIMARY TASKS:

10A. Plan and budget for follow-up.

10B. Make strategic choices about where to focus follow-up efforts.

10C. Engage in systematic reflective practice about the DP-FE and its processes and uses with primary intended users.

10D. Engage in personal reflective practice to support ongoing professional development.

RESULTS of phase 10: The use of DP-FE is enhanced, deepened, and reinforced.

10A. Principles become more deeply embedded in and connected to practice.

10B. Principles-focused evaluation is ongoing.

“Follow the principle of embedding the evaluation work in the programming. Do not make it separate, do not make it external, and do not make it an add-on. Embed evaluation and integrate it so that it is part of your engagement with the population, part of empowerment, part of relationship-building, all of which involves hearing participants’ stories. You probably do that already, that is, hear participants’ stories. But you probably aren’t capturing them, systematically documenting them, and looking for patterns at the level of principles.”⁴³

⁴² See the U-FE checklist from the Evaluation Center Checklist Project for more factors that can affect the utility of evaluations. https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u350/2018/ufe-patton.pdf
⁴³ Patton, 2018b, pp. 5-6.
6 Steps for Evaluative Reasoning in Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation

The previous framework, or 10 phases for DP-FE adapted from Patton’s checklist, is focused on checking in on and attending to issues and activities necessary for facilitating a DP-FE as opposed to checking off, especially when designing and planning a DP-FE for intended use by intended users. Much of the 10-phase framework is prefigurative, laying the groundwork for evaluative reasoning in a participatory manner. While both frameworks are procedural, the first is reframed as containing “phases” to honor the potentially emergent and nonlinear nature of the DP-FE process. This six-step framework for evaluative reasoning is distinguished by steps, suggesting a linearity to the logic of evaluation within the process. Therefore, it zooms in on the core logic and methodology of evaluation, which is an implicit through-line in the 10-phase framework for DP-FE.

Steps 1-3 of this evaluative reasoning procedure are found interspersed in phases 1-7 in the DP-FE procedural framework. Steps 4-6 are found within phase 8 of the DP-FE procedure. Refer to both frameworks to ensure that you are creating the conditions for the successful use of the DP-FE processes and findings and that those processes and findings are evaluative in nature, in that they determine the merit of the Digital Principles and principles-driven initiatives by making judgments about their meaningfulness, manifest adherence, and results of adherence.

1 STEP 1: For each major evaluation question, list all the relevant criteria of merit.

- For DP-FE, these criteria are meaningfulness of the Principles to those using and affected by them as manifest by the GUIDE criteria; adherence to the Principles comprised of the sub-criteria of direction, distance, and pace; and effectiveness as evidenced by the degree and importance of contribution of the Principles to observed results.

Meaningfulness: To what extent and in what ways are the Digital Principles meaningful to our organization or initiative?
- Sub-criteria for judging meaningfulness:
  - Guidance clarity
  - Usefulness
  - Inspiring
  - Developmental and adaptable
  - Evaluable

Adherence: If meaningful, to what extent and in what ways are the Digital Principles adhered to in practice at our organization or initiative?
- Sub-criteria for judging adherence:
  - Direction: To what degree were the Principles being implemented or resisted?
  - Distance: How extensively were the Principles being implemented?
  - Pace: What was the speed of implementation?

Results: If adhered to, to what extent and in what ways are the Digital Principles leading to desired results?
- Sub-criteria for judging results:
  - There are no specific prescriptions for P-FE or DP-FE sub-criteria for the quality of results, though the nature and strength of evidence linking observed adherence and results should be considered.

44 See Appendix I.
2 **STEP 2: Determine the relative importance of criteria.**

- For formative and developmental evaluation, *meaningfulness* and *adherence* will be more important. For summative evaluation, the *results* of adherence will be more important.
- The relative importance of adherence sub-criteria for the evaluation of the Paris Declaration were 1) direction, 2) distance, and 3) pace.

3 **STEP 3: Establish standards for criteria of merit.**

- Define “how good is good,” i.e., what the “constellation of evidence” on each criterion would look like in order to say something was “good,” “barely acceptable,” “unacceptable,” or “excellent.”
- A realistic, contextual, in-depth description of what adherence to the Principles and results looks like for the situation and context with which the DP-FE is occurring.
- Create rating scales or rubrics for degrees of meaningfulness, adherence, and results.  
- For results, consider using the standards of results called “progress markers” from Outcome Mapping, a U-FE inspired evaluation approach. These are:
  - Results we would expect to see
  - Results we like to see
  - Results we would love to see

4 **STEP 4: Gather and analyze data.**

- Gather and analyze the right mix of evidence, being sure to triangulate using multiple sources.
- Sample instances of the Principles being implemented. Document variations in adherence. Get multiple and diverse perspectives on adherence and results.
- The evaluation of the Paris Declaration used 21 country case studies and 18 international development agency case studies.

5 **STEP 5: Draw evaluative conclusions.**

- Compare the evidence of performance and results against the standards or definitions of “how good is good.”
- Tell and document the story about how adherence to Principles does or doesn’t lead to results.
- Report on rank-ordered direction and degree of adherence to the Principles.

6 **STEP 6: Synthesize sub-evaluative conclusions into overall evaluative conclusion.**

- Combine the evaluative conclusions about the criteria and sub-criteria for each evaluation question.
- Render a judgement about the whole set of principles interacting together systematically, not just individual principles.
- The evaluation of the Paris Declaration Principles synthesized the interrelationships among the principles and rank-ordered the degree of adherence to impacts.

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45 See appendices V, VI, and VII for illustrative examples of meaningfulness, adherence, and results.
46 Weaving elements of different evaluation frameworks is a common evaluation practice. Chapter 32 of Patton 2018a covers the weaving of Outcome Harvesting, a model inspired by Outcome Mapping, and P-FE.
Key Premises for Credible Judgements About Effectiveness Principles

- **Make principles real to the readers and intended users of the evaluation.** Describe principles in action and in practice, portray them behaviorally in descriptive storytelling.
- **Connect the dots between adherence to principles and results.** Judging a principle as effective requires a detailed storyline about how the effectiveness unfolds as principles are followed.
- **Support judgements with multiple sources of evidence to increase credibility.** Triangulate methods, data sources, theory, and analysis.
- **Argue with your arguments.** Acknowledge counterarguments, weak links in the storyline, omissions in the data, qualifications, and the relative strength of warrants and backings to claims.
- **Incorporate evidence and arguments from sources outside the evaluation.** Support evaluation data and conclusions with relevant research findings, expert analysis, practitioner experiences, and relevant social theory.
- **Context matters, so position findings, conclusions, and judgements as context sensitive, context dependent, and context specific.** Context is important for judging principles because principles have to be adapted to context following the Developmental criterion for quality principles.

Digital Principles-Focused Meta-Evaluation

Phase 10 of the DP-FE procedural framework referred to the systematic reflection of the DP-FE. Evaluating the quality of evaluation processes and products is known as meta-evaluation. The principles of P-FE can and should be used to assess the quality of specific designs and applications of P-FE and DP-FE. A key lesson from the P-FE of the Paris Declaration is that a P-FE will be expected to abide by the principles of the initiative being evaluated. An additional meta-evaluative framework can be derived from the Digital Principles themselves when looking to assess the quality of specific designs or applications of DP-FE. Use this meta-evaluative framework in tandem with the P-FE framework for manifest sensitivity to P-FE principles for formative or summative meta-evaluation of DP-FE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Principle</th>
<th>Evaluation Principle</th>
<th>Proposed Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design With the User</td>
<td>Promote intended use by intended users</td>
<td>Identify and engage with intended users of the evaluation to determine priority uses and appropriate methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the Existing Ecosystem</td>
<td>Conduct situational analyses</td>
<td>Analyze the situation in which evaluation will occur, paying attention to political context and implications of findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design for Scale</td>
<td>Engage in principles-focused reflective practice</td>
<td>Reflect on strengths and weaknesses of the DP-FE process and results to learn, improve, and share with the ecosystem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build for Sustainability</td>
<td>Foster process use and evaluative capacity</td>
<td>Be aware and strategic about how facilitating the evaluation has impacts on those involved with the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Data Driven</td>
<td>Make warranted conclusions and credible judgements</td>
<td>Think and engage evaluatively, stay empirically grounded, that is, rigorously gather, interpret, and report data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Open Standards</td>
<td>Use existing models, criteria, and standards</td>
<td>Don’t reinvent P-FE tools, use existing evaluation criteria and standards from prescriptive evaluation models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reuse and Improve</td>
<td>Follow asset-based evaluation and adapt</td>
<td>Adapt to changed priorities; utilize existing evaluation capacity and repurpose secondary data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address Privacy and Security</td>
<td>Be data responsible and ethical</td>
<td>Respect the rights of others and ensure data-responsible practices through intentional design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Collaborative</td>
<td>Apply collaborative and participatory approaches</td>
<td>Where appropriate, involve intended users in all phases of the evaluation process, supporting process, and findings use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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47 Distilled and adapted from Patton 2018a, pp. 209-210.
48 For more on this, refer to Exhibit 35.3 on page 356 of Patton’s 2018 text for assessing the manifest sensitivity to the principles of P-FE.
49 Patton, 2018, p. 236
50 See Exhibit 35.1 (Patton, 2018, p. 364) for a list of more than 60 P-FE evaluation tools and their potential uses.
Concluding Thoughts

This primer has sought to sensitize principles-driven practitioners and organizations, especially endorsers of the Principles for Digital Development, to the premises, processes, and operational principles of the emerging model of evaluation supported by DIAL for evaluating the Digital Principles and initiatives seeking to apply them for meaningful digital development results. We are calling this Digital Principles-focused evaluation. Much of the work has been a distillation and adaptation of Dr. Michael Quinn Patton’s text, *Principles-Focused Evaluation: The Guide*. Those who are serious about pursuing DP-FE at their organizations would do well to consult that reference.

DIAL intends to provide capacity-building support for organizations interested in conducting DP-FEs. Encouraging and supporting DP-FEs within the digital development ecosystem enables DIAL to rise to a new level of accountability as steward of the Digital Principles. By doing so, and by aggregating findings across anticipated DP-FEs, DIAL will reflexively apply the *Be Data Driven* principle in stewarding the Digital Principles and ensuring they are truly living, developmental principles that help organizations navigate the complexities of pursuing meaningful digital development outcomes in order to create a world where everyone benefits from the promise of digital technologies.
# Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDD</td>
<td>Principles for Digital Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Digital Principles (alternate name for PDD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-FE</td>
<td>Principles-focused evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP-FE</td>
<td>Digital Principles-focused evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-FE</td>
<td>Utilization-focused evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBE</td>
<td>Theory-based evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT4D</td>
<td>Information and communications technologies for development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEL</td>
<td>Monitoring, evaluation, and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCT</td>
<td>Randomized controlled trial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAL</td>
<td>Digital Impact Alliance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: The GUIDE Criteria and Rubric for Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation

The following criteria and explanations are used as a north star throughout the DP-FE for evaluability assessments and as a conceptual guide and sub-criteria for evaluating the meaningfulness of the Digital Principles to primary intended users within a given digital development context. Since the Digital Principles are generally accepted, collaboratively developed, and endorsed across 240 digital development organizations, they are not subject to unilateral revisions by any one organization. Accordingly, formative evaluability assessments of the Principles are oriented to identifying and mitigating any challenges in conducting a DP-FE for a given context relative to how the Principles compare to these criteria. When the criteria are used to systematically evaluate the meaningfulness of the Digital Principles, these findings will help organizations more intentionally apply the Principles. When shared publicly, they will enable DIAL to facilitate a collaborative evolution of the Principles responsive to the dynamics of the digital development ecosystem.

The GUIDE Criteria and Rubric for Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sample quality assessment rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guiding</td>
<td>A principle is prescriptive. It provides advice and guidance on what to do, how to think, what to value, and how to act to be effective. It offers direction. The wording is imperative: Do this. The guidance is sufficiently distinct that it can be distinguished from contrary or alternative guidance.</td>
<td>• Excellent&lt;br&gt;• Good&lt;br&gt;• Fair&lt;br&gt;• Poor&lt;br&gt;• Worthless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>A high-quality principle is useful in informing choices and decisions. Its utility resides in being actionable, interpretable, feasible, and pointing the way toward desired results for any relevant situation. The principle provides guidance for translating knowledge into action.</td>
<td>• Very useful&lt;br&gt;• Fairly useful&lt;br&gt;• Slightly useful&lt;br&gt;• Useless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>Principles are values based, incorporating and expressing ethical premises, which is what makes them meaningful. They articulate what matters, both in how to proceed and the desired result. They articulate how to do things right (effectively) and the right thing to do (express the values basis for action). That should be inspirational.</td>
<td>• Very inspiring&lt;br&gt;• Fairly inspiring&lt;br&gt;• Somewhat inspiring&lt;br&gt;• Slightly inspiring&lt;br&gt;• Uninspiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental</td>
<td>The developmental nature of a high-quality principle refers to its adaptability and applicability to diverse contexts and over time. A principle is thus both context sensitive and adaptable to real-world dynamics, providing a way to navigate the turbulence of complexity and uncertainty. In being applicable over time, it is enduring (not time-bound) in support of ongoing development and adaptation in an ever-changing world.</td>
<td>• Highly adaptable and applicable across diverse and complex contexts&lt;br&gt;• Fairly adaptable and applicable across diverse and complex contexts&lt;br&gt;• Somewhat adaptable and applicable across diverse and complex contexts&lt;br&gt;• Slightly adaptable and applicable across diverse and complex contexts&lt;br&gt;• Not adaptable and applicable across diverse and complex contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluable</td>
<td>A high-quality principle must be evaluable. This means it is possible to document and judge whether it is actually being followed, and document and judge what results from following the principle. In essence, it is possible to determine if following the principle takes you where you want to go.</td>
<td>• Highly evaluable&lt;br&gt;• Fairly evaluable&lt;br&gt;• Somewhat evaluable&lt;br&gt;• Slightly evaluable&lt;br&gt;• Not evaluable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51 Adapted from exhibit 6.4 on p. 43 in Patton 2018a. See part II in Patton, 2018a for detailed explanations and examples of these criteria manifest across different principle-based initiatives.
Appendix II: Frequently Asked Questions About Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation

While this FAQ section is focused on DP-FE, two different FAQ lists about P-FE can be found 1) in the epilogue of Patton’s 2018 text and 2) at this link from the Tamarack Institute.

Operational Specificity: Specific guidance for practice may include the normative basis for and procedural guidelines regarding:

Q: When, how, and what evaluation questions are identified and prioritized?
A: Identifying and prioritizing evaluation questions doesn’t occur until phase 7 of Patton’s 10-phase process for P-FE. This order suggests the importance of convening intended users to establish intended use with DP-FE. The three generic evaluation questions related to the criterion of meaningfulness, adherence, and results should be prioritized and adapted by context and intended use. Secondary or additional evaluation questions can be added to the primary questions depending on intended use and contextual factors.

Q: Who participates in each stage of the DP-FE evaluation process?
A: The 10-phase process details which evaluation stakeholders are engaged and when. With an emphasis on use, especially process use, DP-FE is highly participatory and requires considerable facilitation skills from the evaluator or evaluation team. DP-FE strikes a balance between evaluator and practitioner control of the process, emphasizes prioritization of primary intended users for selection of participation, and deep participation over consultation.

Q: What role does the DP-F evaluator assume?
A: The role of a DP-F evaluator will be dependent on the nature and size of the endorsing organization and configured to promote primary intended use. Possible roles include independent external, independent internal, team with internal or external, collaborative, evaluator as coach/facilitator, interactive, and embedded.

Q: What methods are ideal?
A: “You can weave together qualitative and quantitative data. The example of the Paris Declaration Principles involved actually quantifying the distance, direction and speed of progress on each of the five principles on five-point scales. The numerical ratings were based on judging and rating varieties of data for each principle. At the community level, if the principle is to build social capital, you could use Robert Putnam’s instrument for measuring social capital. Mixed methods can be used. Principles-focused evaluation is methodologically agnostic and does not favor either quantitative or qualitative data inherently.”

Q: How are the values underlying DP-FE best enacted?
A: Following Patton’s observation that “Principles are grounded in values about what matters to those who develop, adopt, and attempt to follow them,” the values underlying DP-FE are captured in the principles of P-FE and the Digital Principles themselves. The best way to enact these underlying values is to apply these principles in contextually relevant and culturally responsive ways.

Q: How are plans for using the evaluation process and its results considered?
A: As a prescriptive evaluation model within the utilization-focused evaluation approach, the intended use of DP-FE processes and findings for intended users are considered from the outset of the evaluation and a key sensitizing issue throughout the 10-phase process of DP-FE.

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52 Dimensions and questions adapted from Miller’s 2010 Standards for Empirical Examination of Evaluation Theory.
53 Patton 2018a, pp. 581-599
55 See Appendix III for additional options for focusing a DP-FE.
56 Patton, 2018b
57 Patton, 2018a, p. 220.
Range of Application: What practice circumstances and what evaluative questions any prescriptive evaluation theory can be applied to.

Consider the following point from Patton about the range of application in asking evaluation questions of the meaningfulness, adherence, and results of any principles:

You can ask and answer them as an individual, in the privacy of your own thoughts. You can ask and answer them as a couple, in your significant relationship. You can ask and answer them as a family, or as a group or people who work and engage together. You can also ask and answer these questions as a program, organization, community, change initiative, or social innovation endeavor. You can ask and answer them informally or formally. Casually or systematically, and as a brief distraction or a concentrated commitment. When you do so formally, systematically and as a concentrated commitment, you have moved in the territory of seriously evaluating principles: evaluating their meaningfulness; evaluating adherence to them; and evaluating their effectiveness.

Q: What are the most suitable conditions for applying the theory?  
A: DP-FE is most suitable for evaluations in complex dynamic situations by principles-driven organizations that endorse the Digital Principles.  

Q: When the theory is applied under ideal circumstances, are the processes and outcomes similar to or different from those that occur when it is applied in circumstances that are less than ideal?  
A: The processes of DP-FE can be adapted to varying contexts for varying purposes. Adherence to the principles of DP-FE and P-FE is more important than fidelity to an operating procedure. However, the results for each of the 10-phases have been outlined and are intended to serve as inputs for subsequent steps. The ultimate results of DP-FE are intended uses of determinations about the merit of Digital Principles and Principles-driven initiatives for intended users.

Q: How adaptable is theory across a range of conditions?  
A: The theory is intended to be adapted across a range of conditions as evidenced in Appendix III. All adaptations for DP-FE should be vectored to intended use for intended users.

Feasibility in Practice: How easy or difficult the prescriptions for practice and sensitizing ideas in the evaluation theory are to apply.

Q: Can an evaluator readily do what DP-FE requires of them?  
A: This question needs to be asked for each prospective application of DP-FE, as explained in phase 2 of the DP-FE 10-phase process. DP-F evaluators do require fundamental knowledge and evaluation skills to pursue a DP-FE, not the least of which are group facilitation skills. However, DP-F evaluators should follow the “Get on with it” principle Patton refers to from George Herbert: “Do not wait; the time will never be ‘just right.’ Start where you stand, and work with whatever tools you may have at your command, and better tools will be found as you go along.”

Q: What are the technical considerations and demands of the process of DP-FE?  
A: DP-FE is highly participatory and facilitative. As such, the technical demands of the model are not found within sophisticated data collection or analysis methods, though those could be employed depending on the situation. Instead, they are devoted to engaging and working with intended users and evaluation stakeholders to ensure process and findings use are intentionally pursued.

Q: What are the requisite role aspects and capacities for users?  
A: While the role of the DP-F evaluator can be adjusted, evaluators should seek to identify and involve primary intended users who are interested, knowledgeable, open, connected to important stakeholder constituencies, credible, teachable, committed, and available for interaction throughout the evaluation process.

58 2018a, p. 1  
59 See chapter 2 of Patton 2018a for an explanation of the ‘Niche’ of P-FE.
Discernable Impact: Many theories are justified on the basis of claims about the desirable outcomes produced by applying the particular approach.

Q: Does the use of DP-FE actually lead to the impacts that are expected and desired?
A: At a high-level, DP-FE is intended to provide feedback to Principles-driven endorsing organizations on how and how well using the Digital Principles are helping them to navigate the complexity of the digital development ecosystem in pursuit of their organizational strategies and goals. While P-FE has been proven a useful model for principles-driven organizations, the degree to which DP-FE leads to greater meaningfulness, adherence, and results from following the Digital Principles is yet to be seen.

Q: Are there any unintended effects?
A: There may be unintended use for intended users, or unintended use for unintended users. These typically occur when process use has not been adequately planned for in advance by the DP-F evaluator. For instance, primary users or evaluation stakeholders may increase their awareness of and commitment to applying the Digital Principles, or there may be unintended or more appropriately unanticipated gains in organizational evaluation culture and capacity. However, to the extent these uses are unintended and not planned for, they will not be as strongly manifest as when they are intentionally considered and designed for by DP-F evaluators and users. There is the potential for unintended negative consequences in the form of symbolic and legitimative use among primary users. Instances of these evaluation misuses or negative effects should be mitigated by the DP-F evaluator.

Reproducibility: Impacts that are observed can be reproduced over time, occasions, and evaluators.

Q: Is the process reproducible?
A: Many evaluations have flown under the banner of utilization-focused, developmental, or principles-focused, but don’t contain the hallmarks of these evaluation models and approaches and wouldn’t be considered exemplars or instances of these models at all. While the DP-FE model can and should be adapted to context, the degree of replicability is found in applying the principles of P-FE while asking the primary DP-FE questions.

Q: Are the outputs and outcomes reproducible?
A: A list of intended outputs from the various processes of DP-FE can be compiled from the 10 phases of DP-FE. The outcomes of DP-FE can be viewed in terms of intended use. If intended findings and process use have been identified, pursued, and realized through the course of the evaluation, then the outputs and outcomes of DP-FE can be said to be reproducible across contexts.

Q: Is the DP-FE used more as a sensitizing ideology or a source of practical guidance on carrying out aspects of evaluation?
A: Both. DP-FE is based on key premises and principles that can and should be adapted and modified from context to context. The concepts in this guide are intended to primarily sensitize readers to the DP-FE model. However, the processes of P-FE, inasmuch as DP-FE is a sector-specific application of P-FE, are clearly articulated along with an assortment of tools and resources in this document and in the P-FE source text for practical guidance.

Q: How much variation in implementation is expected, appropriate, or permissible?
A: Variation is expected and should be moderated by intended use by intended users. Not varying the DP-FE process and design to intended use for intended users is not appropriate and undermines the principles of DP-FE.

Q: How critical is fidelity to procedure to produce replicable results?
A: Fidelity, or manifest adherence, should be primarily oriented to the principles of DP-FE, which can be thought of as the combination of the Digital Principles in evaluation contexts as articulated in the section on Digital Principles-focused meta-evaluation and the principles of P-FE. To a lesser degree, adherence to the procedures for conducting the DP-FE and evaluative reasoning contained in the methods section of this guidance are also important to produce the intended outputs and results for a DP-FE. In the end, the most important results for a DP-FE are the intended uses (not misuses) of evaluation processes and findings for intended users, which are predicated on the process and product of making evaluative judgements about the merits of the Digital Principles in a given context.
## Appendix III: Comparing Theory of Change and Principles Frameworks

### Comparing Theory of Change as a Framework With Principles as a Framework

**Tendencies, Predilections, and Nuances, Not Absolute Differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of comparison</th>
<th>Theory of change</th>
<th>Principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall use and intention</strong></td>
<td><em>Same for both theories of change and principles: Concerned with specifying an effective and evaluable pathway to desired results and change.</em></td>
<td>Practitioners’, change agents’, and social innovators’ values, experiences, commitments, and visions for a better world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origin</strong></td>
<td>Scholarly research and theory specifying causal mechanisms that lead to predictable outcomes.</td>
<td>Practitioners’, change agents’, and social innovators’ values, experiences, commitments, and visions for a better world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formulation</strong></td>
<td>Differentiating baseline conditions, interventions variables, change mechanisms, and hypothesized outcomes as a descriptive and predictive causal model.</td>
<td>Imperative statements that prescribe value-based actions that are believed (hypothesized) to be effective in moving toward desired results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory orientation</strong></td>
<td>A theory of change states how the desired results will be accomplished, for example, how the quality of life for immigrants will be improved; how poverty will be reduced; how educational attainment will be enhanced; or how youth will be developed. <em>The theory orientation is to predict and explain.</em></td>
<td>A principles-driven initiative is undergirded by or provides a basis for a theory of action that articulates how the work will be done, for example, helping people help themselves. Such a theory of action can be applied to any problem—helping immigrants, poverty reduction, youth development, disease prevention—but the mission focus is on how the work will be done. <em>The theory orientation is to support action.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>Scientific, research, and academic terminology. Scientists may find “principles” vague and overly value-laden.</td>
<td>Practitioner, policymaker, and ordinary people’s terminology. Program staff and participants may find theory-of-change language off-putting, abstract, and too academic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Focused on predictive reliability, construct validity, explanatory power, and replicability.</td>
<td>Focuses on meaningfulness to adherents, interpretability, inspirational underpinnings, and adaptability to a great variety of conditions and situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credibility</strong></td>
<td>Highly credible among scholars and researchers.</td>
<td>Highly credible among people engaged in change efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach to specification</strong></td>
<td>Operationalizing variables: specificity and precision valued and expected.</td>
<td>Sensitizing concepts: comfortable with ambiguity, interpretative variability, and qualitative meaning making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluability</strong></td>
<td>Rigorous research designs under controlled conditions; meta-analysis.</td>
<td>Systematic inquiry across diverse situations; qualitative synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach to causality</strong></td>
<td>Attribution analysis and predictive modeling.</td>
<td>Contribution analysis and nonlinear interactions in complex dynamic systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peer review</strong></td>
<td>Scholars, theorists, researchers.</td>
<td>Practitioners, activists, advocates, change agents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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60 Patton, 2018, p. 389, Epilogue Exhibit 2.
### Options for Focusing an Evaluation

#### Ways of distinguishing evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample options</th>
<th>How to choose among options in Digital Principles-focused evaluations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Purpose distinctions** | - Purpose determines and drives use.  
- Negotiate with primary intended users and be clear about the priority intended purpose of an evaluation.  
- Watch for and manage conflicts and tensions between different purposes.  
- Purpose determines evaluation questions, design, methods, analysis, reporting, and use. |
| a) Summative evaluation: Make overall judgments of merit, worth, and significance to inform a major decision like continuing, ending, expanding, or contracting a model program.  
b) Formative evaluation: Identify strengths and weaknesses and provide feedback to improve a model and get it ready for summative evaluation.  
c) Accountability: Determine if resources are being applied as prescribed by the funder and if specific mandated ways of operating are being followed.  
d) Developmental evaluation: Support innovation and adaptation in complex dynamic environments.  
e) Knowledge generation: Extrapolate lessons to inform initiatives and evaluations in the future. | |
| **2. Focus of evaluation** | - Be utilization-focused regardless of the evaluand; the same processes and steps apply to enhance use. |
| a) Program  
b) Project  
c) Product  
d) Personnel  
e) Strategy  
f) Policy  
g) **Principles (as the intervention)** | |
| **3. Types of evaluation** | - Focus on the most important concerns, issues, and questions of the intended users.  
- Ensure adequate resources and time to do a high-quality evaluation of whatever type is being conducted. |
| a) Inputs  
b) Process  
c) Implementation  
d) Outcomes  
e) Impact  
f) Cost-effectiveness  
g) Cost-benefit  
h) Strategy focused  
i) **Principles focused**  
j) Combinations of the above | |
| **4. Evaluation approaches** | - Be sure primary intended users understand the assumptions, values, requirements, evaluator skills, and kinds of results associated with different evaluation approaches. |
| a) Theory driven  
b) Participatory  
c) Empowerment  
d) Experimental designs (RCTs)  
e) Quasi-experimental designs  
f) Realist systems  
g) Feminist  
h) Culturally responsive | |
| **5. Evaluator roles** | - Ensure that primary intended users understand the implications of role options for evaluation costs, findings credibility, evaluator skill requirements, and expectations of stakeholder engagement. |
| a) Independent, external  
b) Independent, internal  
c) Team with internal and external  
d) Collaborative  
e) Evaluator as coach/facilitator  
f) Interactive  
g) Embedded | |

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61 See exhibit 5.1 in Patton 2018a.
## Illustrative Rubric for Evaluating the Meaningfulness of the Digital Principles

Based on your experience, knowledge, and perspective as a digital development practitioner, please rate each proposed Digital Principle on the 5-point scales provided.

### Your ratings on clarity of guidance:
How clear is the guidance offered to you as a practitioner? To what extent is it clear to you what you should do to follow each principle? Please check the box in each row that best fits your opinion about the clarity of each principle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Very clear: I know what this means</th>
<th>Fairly clear</th>
<th>Partly clear, partly vague</th>
<th>Fairly vague</th>
<th>Very vague: I’m not sure what this means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design With the User</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the Existing Ecosystem</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Design for Scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build for Sustainability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be Data Driven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be Open&lt;sup&gt;64&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reuse and Improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Address Privacy and Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be Collaborative</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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62 Adapted from exhibit 21.3 from Patton, 2018a. This only includes the Guiding criterion. See also Appendix I.

63 This rubric is illustrative of the Guiding criterion. Similar rubrics would be needed for the other four GUIDE criteria for meaningfulness.

64 Use Open Standards, Open Data, Open Source, and Open Innovation.
## Appendix VI: Illustrative Rubric for Evaluating the Adherence of the Digital Principles

### Evaluation Rubric for Adherence to the Digital Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Direction of implementation</th>
<th>Distance traveled in implementation</th>
<th>Pace of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design With the User</strong></td>
<td>a) Substantial movement toward adherence</td>
<td>a) Substantial</td>
<td>a) Fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Some movement toward adherence</td>
<td>b) Some</td>
<td>b) Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Little movement toward adherence</td>
<td>c) Little</td>
<td>c) Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) No movement toward adherence</td>
<td>d) None</td>
<td>d) None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Regression away from adherence</td>
<td>e) Regression</td>
<td>e) Reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand the Existing Ecosystem</strong></td>
<td>a) Substantial movement toward adherence</td>
<td>a) Substantial</td>
<td>a) Fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Some movement toward adherence</td>
<td>b) Some</td>
<td>b) Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Little movement toward adherence</td>
<td>c) Little</td>
<td>c) Slow</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d) No movement toward adherence</td>
<td>d) None</td>
<td>d) None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Regression away from adherence</td>
<td>e) Regression</td>
<td>e) Reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design for Scale</strong></td>
<td>a) Substantial movement toward adherence</td>
<td>a) Substantial</td>
<td>a) Fast</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Some movement toward adherence</td>
<td>b) Some</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>e) Regression away from adherence</td>
<td>e) Regression</td>
<td>e) Reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Build for Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>a) Substantial movement toward adherence</td>
<td>a) Substantial</td>
<td>a) Fast</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Some movement toward adherence</td>
<td>b) Some</td>
<td>b) Moderate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Little movement toward adherence</td>
<td>c) Little</td>
<td>c) Slow</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) No movement toward adherence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Regression away from adherence</td>
<td>e) Regression</td>
<td>e) Reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be Data Driven</strong></td>
<td>a) Substantial movement toward adherence</td>
<td>a) Substantial</td>
<td>a) Fast</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) Some movement toward adherence</td>
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<td>c) Little movement toward adherence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e) Regression away from adherence</td>
<td>e) Regression</td>
<td>e) Reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be Open</strong></td>
<td>a) Substantial movement toward adherence</td>
<td>a) Substantial</td>
<td>a) Fast</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) Some movement toward adherence</td>
<td>b) Some</td>
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<td>c) Little movement toward adherence</td>
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<td>c) Slow</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d) No movement toward adherence</td>
<td>d) None</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Regression away from adherence</td>
<td>e) Regression</td>
<td>e) Reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reuse and Improve</strong></td>
<td>a) Substantial movement toward adherence</td>
<td>a) Substantial</td>
<td>a) Fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Some movement toward adherence</td>
<td>b) Some</td>
<td>b) Moderate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Little movement toward adherence</td>
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<td>c) Slow</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) No movement toward adherence</td>
<td>d) None</td>
<td>d) None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Regression away from adherence</td>
<td>e) Regression</td>
<td>e) Reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Address Privacy and Security</strong></td>
<td>a) Substantial movement toward adherence</td>
<td>a) Substantial</td>
<td>a) Fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Some movement toward adherence</td>
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<td>b) Moderate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e) Regression away from adherence</td>
<td>e) Regression</td>
<td>e) Reverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be Collaborative</strong></td>
<td>a) Substantial movement toward adherence</td>
<td>a) Substantial</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) Some movement toward adherence</td>
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<td>d) None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Regression away from adherence</td>
<td>e) Regression</td>
<td>e) Reverse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

65 Adapted from exhibit 2.15 from Patton, 2018a.
66 Use Open Standards, Open Data, Open Source, and Open Innovation.
Appendix VII: Example Rubric for Rating the Degree of Impact of Adhering to the Digital Principles

Use this rubric to input results statements for an endorsing organization’s digital development strategy or initiative.

Example Evaluation Rubric for Adherence to the Digital Principles
Conclusions on the effects of adhering to the Digital Principles
(Judgements should be based on multiple sources of evidence.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvements in promoting digital inclusion</th>
<th>□ Substantial impact □ Some impact □ Little impact □ No impact □ Regression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvements in expediting the deployment of proven technology</td>
<td>□ Substantial impact □ Some impact □ Little impact □ No impact □ Regression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements in expanding the distribution channels primed to deliver services at scale</td>
<td>□ Substantial impact □ Some impact □ Little impact □ No impact □ Regression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements in ensuring responsible, widespread access and use of network data for development</td>
<td>□ Substantial impact □ Some impact □ Little impact □ No impact □ Regression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have there been unintended consequences of seeking to apply the Principles for Digital Development in this particular context (e.g., unintended impacts on particular groups, such as women and girls)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67 Adapted from Exhibit 21.6 in Patton 2018a.
Appendix VIII: Example Survey Protocol for Meaningfulness of *Design With the User* Principle

Standard Likert-scale response options can be used for all survey items, e.g., a) *Strongly agree*; b) *Agree*; c) *Neutral*; d) *Disagree*; e) *Strongly disagree*.

**Principle 1: Design With the User**

**Guiding**
1) The principle is prescriptive; it provides advice and guidance on what to do, how to think, what to value, and how to act and be effective.
2) The principle provides clear direction.
3) The wording is imperative: *Do this ... to be effective*.
4) The guidance is sufficiently distinct that it can be distinguished from contrary or alternative guidance.

**Useful**
1) The principle is useful in making choices and decisions.
2) The principle’s action implications are interpretable for use.
3) The principle’s guidance is feasible.
4) The principle points the way toward desired results.

**Inspiring**
1) The values expressed by the principle are inspiring.
2) The principle incorporates and expresses ethical premises.
3) The principle is meaningful to what I do.
4) What the principle expresses matters to me.

**Developmental**
1) The principle is context sensitive—relevant to diverse contexts and situations.
2) The principle is complexity relevant—provides guidance for navigating complex dynamic systems.
3) The principle has an enduring quality—meaning over time.
4) The principle is adaptable to emergent challenges in the face of change.

**Evaluable**
1) The meaningfulness of the principle to those expected to follow it can be assessed.
2) It is possible to document and judge whether the principle is actually being followed or adhered to.
3) If adhered to, it is possible to document and judge what results from following the principle to determine if following the principle takes you where you want to go.
4) It is possible to bring data to bear and render judgement about the overall effectiveness of the principle.

68 Adapted from Exhibit 6.4 on page 43 in Patton, 2018a.
Appendix IX: Bank of Example Questions for Potential Interview Protocol for Principle Meaningfulness

**Principle 1: Build for Sustainability**

**Guiding:** A principle is prescriptive. It gives advice and guidance. It provides direction. The guidance is distinct from contrary or alternative guidance.

1) To what extent would you say that you currently follow this principle in your work? Most of the time? Sometimes? Seldom? Never?

2) How do you build for sustainability in your current role?

3) To what extent and in what ways does this principle provide meaningful guidance to you to facilitate digital development (or insert more specific role)?
   a) Can you provide an example of how this principle applies to and informs your work?

4) Based on your knowledge and experience as a (insert role), what is the opposite of “building for sustainability?”
   a) Have there been instances where this has been a feature of your experience with your work?

**Useful:** A principle should have a clear purpose. Its intended use is clear. Yet, it should be sufficiently general to be applicable to a range of situations and challenges. To be useful it must be doable.

5) How do you use this principle in your role in the organization?

6) What do you do in following this principle?
   a) Please provide examples of how you use this principle's guidance in facilitating digital development (or insert more specific role).

7) In what ways, if any, is this principle not useful in your current situation?
   a) Are there any specific situations or challenges where the principle would not be useful?

**Inspiring:** Principles are values based, incorporating and expressing an ethical premise, which is what makes them meaningful. They articulate what matters, both in how to proceed and the desired result. They should be inspirational.

8) What’s your reaction to this principle?

9) From your perspective, what values about digital development are expressed in this principle?
   a) To what extent, if at all, do you share those values?

10) As a digital development practitioner, to what extent, if at all, do you find this principle inspiring?
    a) Why or why not?

**Developmental:** The developmental nature of a good principle refers to its adaptability and applicability to diverse contexts and over time. A principle is thus both context sensitive and adaptable to real-world dynamics, providing a way to navigate the turbulence of complexity and uncertainty.

11) Please describe the ways in which the clients or partners you have worked with, the context in which you work, or the situations you face in facilitating digital development have changed or varied over time.

12) Given the variations in digital development work you have experienced, how applicable and relevant is this principle to those variations?

13) In what digital development situations that you have encountered do you find this principle not meaningful and relevant, if any? Why?
**Evaluable:** A good principle must be evaluable. This means it is possible to document and judge whether it is actually being followed and document and judge what results from following the principle. In essence, it is possible to determine if following the principle takes you where you want to go.

14) How do you evaluate the sustainability of your work? What ways do you have of monitoring the sustainability of your work?

15) How do you know if the work you are doing is contributing to the building of sustainable products, processes, and other outcomes?

16) In general, what would you consider evidence of something that is being or has been built for sustainability?
Appendix X: Understanding the Ecosystem of Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation-Related or Adjacent Tools

Following the Principle *Understand the Existing Ecosystem*, the following exhibit is an overview of evaluation tools and resources that can be described as principles-driven or principles-related, but not principles-focused. All of these tools, except the Digital Principles Common Metrics indicator bank, were developed parallel to and independent of the development of DP-FE. Accordingly, their reference and application will need to be situated in relation to the premises and processes of the DP-FE model of evaluation to be of most use to DP-FEs.

### Exhibit 4: Digital Principles-Focused Evaluation-Related or Adjacent Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Description and how it relates to DP-FE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Framework for Monitoring and Evaluating Technologies in Social Change Projects</td>
<td>SIMLab</td>
<td>This is a general guidance document for program evaluation focused on interventions using technology solutions for social impact. There is a section that considers how the Digital Principles may be viewed as evaluation criteria (that is, considering the fidelity or adherence of an evaluand to the Principles) and offers a collection of questions that can be repurposed for a checklist, survey, or interview protocol for evaluating adherence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Health Investment Review Tool (DHIRT)</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>The fillable worksheet/rubric and companion guidance documents function in concert as an evaluation checklist and serve as a proposal evaluation tool formatively for contracting organizations and summatively for commissioning organizations. The questions are related to manifest adherence to principles in the design of digital development interventions and technology solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Principles Maturity Matrix</td>
<td>DIAL/Tech Change</td>
<td>This interactive Excel dashboard is intended to serve the same purpose as the DHIRT, though not sector-specific to digital health. There are some differences from the DHIRT in the specific questions asked, rubrics employed, and outputs generated, but both serve to evaluate proposals for formative and summative purposes depending on the primary user.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Template</td>
<td>DIAL</td>
<td>This tool is a style guide and template for writing descriptive case studies for knowledge generation about principles-driven digital development programs, focusing on process and not results. While the template is not explicitly evaluative, some prompts encourage general reflection about the process. This template could be the basis for a DP-FE with additional evaluative reasoning reported from the DP-FE process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>IntraHealth International</td>
<td>This is a final report for an evaluation of the iHRIS suite of information management technologies for national health workforce registries. The purpose of the evaluation was mostly for accountability, with a focus on compliance or alignment to the Principles, and as such only asked the second generic evaluation question of DP-FE about adherence. The type of evaluation was process and implementation, focusing on the product iHRIS as the evaluand. The evaluation used a process called an information audit, a specific evaluation method for information management systems. The evaluation team role was external independent. This provides an example of the types of questions and evaluative reasoning that can be used as a reference for questions of adherence for a product and process evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial Intelligence Evaluation Criteria</td>
<td>Technology Salon(^{69})</td>
<td>This online guidance document is focused on evaluating the adherence of digital development initiatives that employ artificial intelligence. The current form is an evaluation checklist that can be used formatively, developmentally, or summatively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Principles Organizational Self-assessment</td>
<td>DIAL</td>
<td>This self-assessment tool contains a list of generic activities and their description for assessing an organization’s general engagement with the Digital Principles. Since the assessment is not Principles-specific, it can serve as a proxy indication for the meaningfulness of and adherence to the Principles for baseline assessments and an entry point for further investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metrics</td>
<td>DIAL</td>
<td>Recalling that the Digital Principles are overarching effectiveness principles, this bank of process indicators captures operational sub-principles or prescriptions and how to measure them for each of the nine principles. This resource will be most helpful for evaluating adherence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{69}\) See the blog post about its development: [https://technologysalon.org/evaluate-criteria-artificial-intelligence/](https://technologysalon.org/evaluate-criteria-artificial-intelligence/).