World Health Organization

TERMS OF REFERENCE
OF
GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL HEALTH (GIDH)

I. Mission

To accelerate the achievement of Universal Health Coverage by supporting Member States to enhance the strategic and innovative use of digital health technologies.

The Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH) is proposed to consolidate and amplify recent and past gains in global digital health while strengthening mutual accountability to enhance the impact of future investments. The GIDH will be a WHO Managed Network ("Network of Networks") that will promote equitable access to digital health by addressing challenges such as duplication of efforts and "products-focused" digital health transformation through a focus on four foundational pillars: Country Needs Tracker, Country Resource Portal, Transformation Toolbox, Convening and Knowledge Exchange.

This WHO initiative will amplify the work of the Organisation and help stimulate the enabling environment for Member States to undertake national digital health transformation. Digital health transformation is aimed at strengthening health systems and individual health and well-being, ensuring that at least 1 billion more people benefit from universal health coverage, that 1 billion more people are better protected from health emergencies, and that 1 billion more people enjoy better health and well-being (WHO's triple billion targets included in its Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023)[1] through systematic capturing and prioritizing of country needs, identifying resourcing and technical gaps, providing timely access to routinely updated tools to manage transformation, improve quality assurance of technical building blocks and standards-based products, and institutionalization of continuous cross-network, cross-regional knowledge exchange.

II. Status

The Global Initiative on Digital Health is a WHO informal network for stakeholders guided by the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025 and working together to align on assessing and prioritizing Member States' needs, evaluating the availability and reporting of country-level digital health resources and unfunded priorities, support technically and financially the accelerated achievement of GSDH goals, build capacity and converge efforts to encourage developing, maintaining and adapting digital health technologies to continuously changing needs, and address

---

[1] Global strategy on digital health 2020-2025. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240020924

variability in the quality of digital solutions and emerging technologies related to standards, data privacy, security and interoperability, etc..

The Global Initiative on Digital Health is not a separate legal entity and derives its legal status from WHO. Thus, it shall be administered and housed in WHO. The operations of the Global Initiative for Digital Health shall in all respects be administered in accordance with the WHO Constitution and General Programme of Work, WHO's Financial and Staff Regulations and Rules, WHO's manual provisions, and applicable WHO rules, policies, procedures, and practices.

Vision and Goal

The Global Initiative on Digital Health envisions effective and resilient digital health transformation sustained through country leadership in essential processes such as investments, governance, enterprise architecture, and capacity development. The goal of the Global Initiative on Digital Health is to converge global efforts in scaling up commitments and investments of relevant stakeholders in digital health transformation through coordinated engagements and implementations aligned with interoperability standards and WHO norms, standards, and guidelines informed by the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020 - 2025.

To achieve this goal, the Global Initiative on Digital Health will drive global advocacy that facilitates equitable access to healthcare by promoting digital transformation through collective action to aid Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and accelerate process in achieving Health for All.

III.   Core Principles of the Global Initiative on Digital Health

The Global Initiative on Digital Health is governed by the following principles:
- To be inclusive and diverse in membership and structure, ensuring adequate representation from different stakeholder groups, geographical regions and income settings;
- To be transparent in all processes, including the operational strategy and the Global Initiative on Digital Health activities;
- To ensure all activities align with WHO's norms and standards;
- To facilitate coordination among interested parties to advance WHO's priorities on standards based digital health transformation as articulated in the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025 and the Digital Implementation Investment Guide (DIIG), among other normative and technical products.

IV.   Objectives

5.1 Objective 1: Conduct advocacy activities that increase support to WHO public health objectives and raise awareness on adoption and adaptation of digital health technologies which address country needs and priorities. To achieve this, the Global Initiative on Digital Health will:
- Develop a global advocacy strategy for the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020 – 2025 and any future relevant global strategy, policy or implementation recommendations.

- Promote and disseminate information and resources aligned with WHO recommendations on digital health transformation, including data and interoperability norms and standards, data security and privacy.
- Promote and support, when and where relevant, WHO public health messages and as appropriate, events on digital health and innovations at global and regional level.

5.2 Objective 2: Promote needs-based investments in digital health transformation through strengthening country autonomy and advocacy on national digital health priorities. To achieve this, the Global Initiative on Digital Health will:
- Converge global efforts for digital health around needs articulated by countries through a dedicated country-needs tracker (platform) to be co-created with the Secretariat, Steering Committee and members.
- Support competency-based training to prepare skilled human resources that provides technical assistance in adoption of existing tools and support to create new tools & address adoption and implementation gaps as needed.

5.3 Objective 3: Promote transparency and strengthened collaboration leveraging traditional as well as innovative solutions and emerging technologies and resource opportunities. To achieve this, the Global Initiative on Digital Health will:
- Provide a forum where members can discuss the mobilization of available financial resources for digital health transformation.
- Enable a standards-based prospective and retrospective analysis of resource gaps in digital health informed by above mentioned platform.

5.4 Objective 4: Provide countries with tools to measure maturity of the enabling environment for digital health, track digital health initiatives, guide the development and updating of digital health related strategies and policies, strengthen capacity building and identify curated and quality-assured digital solutions. To achieve this, the Global Initiative on Digital Health will:
- Through the Secretariat, provide technical and financial support to ensure existing WHO tools and platforms such as the Digital Health Atlas, Digital Health Clearinghouse, Digital Health Maturity Model, Digital Health Strategy, Policy Repository and Digital Health Behaviour Change Tools are available and accessible to countries and their partners.
- Promote the continuous updating and use of the tools and provide technical inputs on the subject matter for the consideration of WHO to ensure future investments and identification of needs as informed by the current national, regional and global context as relevant.
- Promote strengthened capacity building activities on digital health and use of curated digital solutions. Transformation Toolbox shall ensure quality assured tools and resources that strengthen country capacity and autonomy to manage their national digital health transformation journey. As part of the GIDH Transformation Toolbox, the existing WHO Digital Health Clearinghouse will be promoted and leveraged as a repository of curated

digital solutions which countries and their partners can leverage to guide and inform quality assured digital health transformation which addresses national needs.

5.5 Objective 5: Strengthen networking and knowledge sharing. To achieve this, the Global Initiative on Digital Health will:

- Facilitate communication between stakeholders in global and regional digital health networks, coalitions, communities of practice, private/entrepreneurial sector and more through hosting and supporting routine convening and knowledge exchange (through for example conferences, multi-sectoral webinars and peer-to-peer mentorship opportunities);
- Strengthen and increase communication amongst the Global Initiative on Digital Health participants, with other stakeholders.
- Encourage governments market-shape and their activities to engage entrepreneurial ecosystem in developing quality, interoperable solutions.
- Promote the exchange of relevant evidence research findings through open data principles and platforms.

V.   Governance and structure

The Global Initiative on Digital Health comprises of a Steering Committee, Working Groups, and Global Initiative on Digital Health's participants. The governance and structure of the Global Initiative on Digital Health is designed to facilitate coordination of activities, to ensure activities align with the Global Initiative on Digital health overall mission and objectives, and to preclude influences of individual or organization-specific agendas. The Global Initiative on Digital Health is not a decision-making body, nor does it have any bearing over the work and activities of its participants that occur outside the Global Initiative on Digital Health.

5.1 The Secretariat

WHO serves as the Secretariat of the Global Initiative on Digital Health. The role of the Secretariat is to oversee the day-to-day management of the Global Initiative on Digital Health's work, including coordination of discussions across stakeholders on priorities and gaps, preparation of draft work plans for consideration by the Steering Committee and/or the Working Groups along with administration and budget management.

More specifically, key responsibilities of the Secretariat are as follows:

- Facilitates coordination of activities, to ensure activities align with the Global Initiative on Digital health overall mission and objectives;
- Serves as the interface between the Global Initiative on Digital Health and its participants;
- Selects and manages the Global Initiative on Digital Health 's membership in line with the WHO regulatory and policy frameworks;
- Coordinates the development, implementation, and maintenance of the Global Initiative on Digital Health work plans in consultation with the Steering Committee;

- Oversee implementation of the Global Initiative on Digital Health workplans, in collaboration with the Steering Committee;
- Overall supervision of and guidance to the Working Groups (as approved or established by Steering Committee) including identifying and recruiting Working Groups members and vetting them for any potential risks including
- Chair and support the Steering Committee meetings;
- Monitor and evaluate activities and processes of the Global Initiative on Digital Health, making amendments as necessary, in consultation with the Steering Committee, to optimize overall Global Initiative on Digital Health functioning and impact;
- Coordinate correspondence with the Global Initiative on Digital Health participants, as required, to facilitate participation and collaboration of all participants;
- Coordinate the annual participants meeting of the Global Initiative on Digital Health, in collaboration with the Steering Committee, including development of relevant documentation (e.g., agenda) and logistical support;
- Develop a central repository for the Global Initiative on Digital Health, to house all relevant documents and resources (hosted by WHO);

Develop and regularly update the Global Initiative on Digital Health website (hosted by WHO). Subject to the availability of sufficient human and financial resources for this purpose, Secretariat support and coordination for the Global Initiative on Digital Health will be provided by WHO. Secretariat support will be provided in accordance with WHO's rules, regulations, policies and procedures.

The Secretariat reserves the right not to implement any Global Initiative on Digital Health recommendation or activity which it determines gives rise to undue financial, legal or reputational liability or is contrary to WHO policies, regulations and procedures.

5.2 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee comprises of a sufficient number of participants, who are appointed by WHO. These participants consist of the Chair and co-Chair from members of the Global Initiative on Digital Health and the Chairs of the working groups, including two co-Chairs. The selection process will strive for balanced representation of the Global Initiative on Digital Health participants, with respect to gender, age, geographical area and organization type. Steering Committee decisions will be made through consensus of committee participants. With the exception of the Secretariat, the duration of the term of appointment of the Steering Committee participants shall be for an initial term of two (2) years, with the possibility of renewal once. The Steering Committee is chaired by the Secretariat, who may appoint one participant of the Steering Committee as the Co-Chair for a two-year term.

Key responsibilities of the Steering Committee are as follows:
- Provide overall strategic direction, for the operative work of the Global Initiative on Digital

Health. This includes supporting development of the overall Global Initiative on Digital Health workplans and strategies;

- Jointly coordinate with the Secretariat the participants meeting of the Global Initiative on Digital Health, including development of relevant documentation and logistical support;
- Advise WHO on membership applications;
- Coordinate the establishment of working groups, approve their workplans, and oversee all working group activities;
- Monitor and evaluate annual work plan, activities, and processes of the Global Initiative on Digital Health, proposing amendments as necessary to WHO, to optimize Global Initiative on Digital Health functioning and impact.
- Review the work plan and financial sustainability of the Global Initiative on Digital Health

5.3 Working Groups

To support the technical work and activities of the Global Initiative on Digital Health's, a sufficient number of working groups may be established, subject to Secretariat and Steering Committee approval. The area of focus of the working groups will be decided jointly by the Secretariat and Steering Committee, following expert consultation. The terms of reference for each working group is approved by the Secretariat and is of a 2 years tenure, with possibility of extension, subject to approval by the Steering Committee.

. The purpose of the working groups is to bring together participants with similar interests, to share information and collectively work on specific activities that align with the Global Initiative on Digital Health 's overall mission and objectives. Each working group will have an area of focus with corresponding workplan, that is approved by the Steering Committee, which outlines its objectives, key outputs, priorities and methodology.

A Chair and co-Chair will be appointed in each working group by the Secretariat. They are responsible for:

- Coordinating working group meetings and activities;
- Ensuring that the terms of reference of the working group aligns with the overall objectives and strategic direction of the Global Initiative on Digital Health 2020 – 2025;
- Monitoring and evaluating the performance of the working group;
- Facilitating communication within the group, ensuring balanced participation of its group participants;
  Providing verbal and written reports of working group progress to the Secretariat and the Steering Committee.

The Chair and co-Chair of each working group are part of the Global Initiative on Digital Health Steering Committee and will therefore report on their progress at the /annual participants meeting, and through an annual report to the Steering Committee.

VI.   Membership

The Global Initiative on Digital Health membership[2] consists of representatives from:

- Relevant technical government agencies[3] of Member States
- Intergovernmental organizations
- International organizations
- Non-governmental organizations, including civil society groups;
- Academic institutions;
- Private sector including international business associations (comprising of *2* representative entities);
- Standards Development Organizations;
- Philanthropic foundations.

The private sector including international associations will be represented by constituencies, such that there will be one representative per one sector (for example, one representative for the tech sector headquartered in a Low- and Middle-Income Country, and one for the sector headquartered in a High-Income Country).

All entities seeking to apply for the Global Initiative on Digital Health membership must meet the following criteria:

- The aims and purposes of the applicant entity should be consistent with the WHO Constitution and conform with WHO's regulatory and policy frameworks;
- The entity should contribute significantly to the advancement of public health and to the objectives, vision and goal of the Global Initiative on Digital Health and demonstrate documented support for the WHO;
- The entity should respect the intergovernmental nature of WHO and the decision-making authority of Member States as set out in the WHO Constitution;
- The entity should be actively engaged and working internationally in the field of Digital Health or related field in health including emerging technologies (such as AI, Big data, IoTs etc.), data standards, data privacy and security, project implementation, capacity building etc. with proven experience and expertise in the subject matter, to be determined by the Secretariat;
- The entity should have an established structure, constitutive act, and accountability mechanism;
- The entity, if a membership organization, should have the authority to speak for its participants and have a representative structure;

---

[2] Individuals are not eligible for Global Initiative on Digital Health membership
[3] WHO networks and alliances generally do not comprise Member State representatives as such as these engage through governing bodies (EB / WHA). That said, Network will accept with having members or participants of relevant government technical agencies.

- If a non-State actor applying, the entity is required to provide the following information and documents: name, objectives and mission of the entity, copy of the legal status (such as bylaws, constitution), governance structure, names and affiliations of the participants of main decision-making bodies (such as Board, Executive Board), the assets, annual income and funding sources (list of donors and sponsors), main relevant affiliations and website address. The entity will also sign the tobacco-arms disclosure statement without alteration.

Each participant of the Global Initiative for Digital Health must:
- Actively participate in and support the Global Initiative on Digital Health, its purpose, goals, objectives, guiding principles, work and activities;
- Attend and actively participate at the Global Initiative on Digital Health 's various annual and ad hoc meetings;
- Take responsibility according to the division of labor, and make meaningful contributions, in connection with the work and activities of the various working groups of the Global Initiative for Digital Health;
- Share knowledge and information with other participants (such as resources, data, case studies, experience etc.);
- Act in the best interest of public health in alignment with WHO policies; and
- Ensure effective communication with Secretariat and with the Steering Committee related to activities relevant to the Global Initiative on Digital Health 's mission and vision.

Participants shall not make public statements about the Global Initiative on Digital Health activities or on behalf of the Secretariat without the prior written consent of the Secretariat.

6.1 Membership applications
A standardized form and online application process will be developed by the Secretariat and eligible participants will be approved by the Secretariat. Membership approval will be based on an assessment, due diligence process, and review of submitted documents, in accordance with the eligibility criteria and in accordance with WHO's rules and policies. All membership applications will be reviewed by the Secretariat. Following this, eligible applicants will be notified of their membership approval (or otherwise) by the Secretariat.

VII.   Meetings
As the Secretariat of the Global Initiative on Digital Health, WHO convenes an annual participants meeting, however additional meetings may be scheduled as necessary. The annual participants meeting is open to all Global Initiative on Digital Health's participants. Each participant will be able to nominate a maximum of 2 delegates to attend.

The aim of the annual participants meeting will be to:
- Review the Global Initiative on Digital Health's work plan;

- Serve as a platform for knowledge sharing amongst participants;
- Discuss issues put forward by the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will meet every month, or at another frequency as determined by the Secretariat to report on progress of the working groups, discuss issues and revise the Global Initiative on Digital Health workplan.

The Steering Committee makes recommendations to the Secretariat based on consensus. In the event that a consensus is not reached, the Secretariat can take a decision based on simple majority of members present and voting. The Secretariat reserves the right not to implement any recommendation or activity which gives rise to undue financial, legal or reputational liability or is contrary to WHO policies, regulations and procedures.

Steering Committee participants are accountable for informing their respective organizations on decisions, commitments and plans of the Global Initiative on Digital Health.

Each working group will have meetings, attended by working group participants. The frequency of working group meetings will be determined by the Chair and Co-Chair of the respective working group.

VIII. Termination and withdrawal

Each participant has the right to withdraw from participation in the Global Initiative on Digital Health, at any time, subject to providing one month written notice to the Secretariat and to the orderly conclusion of any ongoing activities. The Secretariat may inform the Steering Committee if a participant has withdrawn from the Digital Health network.

If a participant does not attend two successive annual participants meetings, without appropriate written explanation to the Steering Committee, the participant will be deemed to have withdrawn from the Global Initiative on Digital Health.

The Secretariat also has the right to terminate the membership of any participant at any time, upon providing written notice thereof to such participant. Without limiting the foregoing, the participation of any entity in the Global Initiative on Digital Health shall terminate if and when such participant: (a) no longer subscribes or adheres to the goals, objectives and/or guiding principles of the Global Initiative on Digital Health, as described in these Terms of Reference; (b) engages in activities that are not compatible with WHO Policies, and/or (c) ceases to meet the membership criteria for the Global Initiative on Digital Health, as set forth in these Terms of Reference. In such instances, the decision to terminate involvement of a participant will be made by the Secretariat.

IX. WHO has the right, exercisable in its sole discretion, to close the Global Initiative on Digital Health, at any time upon providing written notice thereof to the participant(s) concerned. WHO also has the right, exercisable in its sole discretion, to terminate any membership, its Steering Committee and/or to terminate any Co-Chairmanship, in each case, at any time upon providing written notice thereof to the participant(s) concerned.

X. The Global Initiative on Digital Health evaluation

The Secretariat will evaluate the overall processes and outcomes of the Global Initiative on Digital Health on a biennial basis, with the aim of assessing whether WHO should continue the Global Initiative on Digital Health.

XI. Communications

10.1 Visual Identity

To ensure that the Global Initiative on Digital Health is deliberately communicating with one voice to external parties on topics of substance (principles, priorities, target product profiles, standards, plans and actions, funding, and all confidential information, etc.) any communication in the name of the Global Initiative on Digital Health will take place through the Secretariat.

The Global Initiative on Digital Health may develop a visual identifier such as a logo which will help identify the network to its audience. The visual identifier will be accompanied by the statement "WHO hosted Network". The right to use the logo, including on publications, may be granted to participants on a case-by-case basis with prior written approval of the Secretariat. Participants shall not use WHO's name, acronym and emblem. This includes, inter alia, the display of the WHO logo and name on any premises, equipment, as well as on any communication and/or training materials, training certificates, social media tools or publications.

10.2 Publications

The Global Initiative on Digital Health shall not produce publications, unless approval is given by the Secretariat. Any publication by a participant, other than WHO, referring to Global Initiative on Digital Health activities shall contain appropriate disclaimers as decided by WHO, including that the content does not reflect the views or stated policy of the participants.

The participants must ensure that the work of the Global Initiative on Digital Health is not misrepresented, and appropriate disclaimers are included where necessary. The Global Initiative on Digital Health activities shall not include the development of technical materials, normative documents or policy papers.

10.3 The Global Initiative on Digital Health website

The Global Initiative on Digital Health has a webpage/official website that is housed within WHO's domain. The webpage includes a list of participants entities, subject to their consent besides detailed activities undertaken by the Global Initiative on Digital Health..

XII.   Finance

Participants will be responsible for their own expenses in relation to all Global Initiative on Digital Health activities (including participation at meetings), unless agreed otherwise by the Secretariat. If participants receive third party funding to support participation in the Global Initiative on Digital Health meetings and activities, this must be disclosed to the Steering Committee and the Secretariat.

The Secretariat support and related day to day operations of the Global Initiative on Digital Health will be financed by voluntary contributions from the participants. The Secretariat may also raise funds from other sources to support the work of the Global Initiative on Digital Health in accordance WHO rules and procedures, as appropriate. All Secretariat funds shall be received, administered and acknowledged in accordance with WHO's policies including its financial regulations, rules, and practices However, grant applications made by the participants for raising funds in the name of the Global Initiative on Digital Health require consultation with and endorsement by the Secretariat to ensure alignment with the goals and principles of the network. The Secretariat reserves the right to require that the Global Initiative on Digital Health name not be used in such grant applications. Contributions by participants including donations (in cash or in kind), will be acknowledged by the Secretariat in accordance with WHO's applicable rules, policies and practices.

XIII.   Confidentiality

Depending on the agenda item being discussed, each participant in the Global Initiative on Digital Health may be required to abide by confidentiality obligation and sign a standard confidentiality undertaking using the form provided by WHO for this purpose.

XIV.   Amendments

These Terms of Reference may be amended from time to time by the Secretariat