

2024

Digital Health and Innovation

WHO Department

Achieving health for all through
innovation and digital transformation

Cover photo: "Amazing planet earth with night city lights"
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World Health
Organization



WHO Department of Digital Health and Innovation

The Department of Digital Health and Innovation (DHI) is committed to improving global health through science-based innovation and digital health. We help countries plan, develop, and ethically implement evidenced-based digital technologies and innovations to address priorities. Our goal is to ensure equitable access to digital solutions while reinforcing the importance of robust foundations, necessary for scale and sustainability.

Today, in an increasingly digital era, the need to integrate technology and innovation is clearer than ever, providing new opportunities to enhance health systems, improve care, and streamline operations. WHO's support to digital health spans over two decades, helping to establish the science-based discipline of digital health.

Despite significant advancements, many countries still face substantial obstacles to their successful implementation of their digital health strategies. They often lack adequate financial resourcing and robust enabling environments, from basic infrastructure to policy and governance. Important gaps in access to digital services and scaled innovation persist, preventing equitable benefits for everyone.

In response, Member States with WHO developed a Global Strategy on

Digital Health (2020-2025), which led to several flagship initiatives detailed in this brochure. Addressing digital health risks and challenges is a critical priority for WHO as it enhances its support for digital health and innovation. At the same time, WHO aims to future-proof and build resilience in national health systems, streamlining their efficiency and effectiveness through evidence-based recommendations with an emphasis on standards, interoperability and local capacity development, related to digital health and innovation.

We believe that strong digital and innovation capacity builds health system resilience, enables continuity of care and improves access to information and services when and where people need them. The digitalization of health is happening, and WHO is working to ensure it benefits everyone, everywhere.

“When we talk about digital health, we are talking about strengthening primary health care systems, improving universal health coverage, and timely and relevant data for decision making and resource allocation.”

Dr. Alain Labrique, Director, Department of Digital Health and Innovation, WHO

Spotlight initiatives

Global Initiative on Digital Health

Launched in October 2023, the Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH) represents a network of organisations, institutions, and government agencies committed to advancing national digital health transformation.

The initiative's mission is to equip governments and partners with the tools, methods and platforms necessary for sustainable health system digital transformation. It supports countries in planning, resourcing, and developing digital health infrastructures that strengthen health systems equitably.

Learn more: www.who.int/initiatives/gidh

Global Digital Health Certification Network

The WHO's Global Digital Health Certification Network (GDHCN) is a global digital public infrastructure that enables verifiable health document portability.

The GDHCN facilitates the verification of health records and certificates such as vaccination records, test results, and workplace credentials. Using an open, standards-based and shared digital framework, the GDHCN enables participating health jurisdictions worldwide to recognize and authenticate each other's documents, streamlining the verification process of trusted portable documents carried by people between institutions and across borders.

Learn here: www.who.int/initiatives/global-digital-health-certification-network

Artificial Intelligence for Health

WHO is harnessing responsible AI to enhance global health, focusing on innovation, equity, and ethical integrity.

WHO aims to help Member States leverage AI to create smarter, more sustainable health systems.

This push is driven by the transformative potential of AI in areas like disease diagnosis, drug development, and health systems management.

WHO's strategic approach revolves around enabling evidence-based governance for AI in health, facilitating a knowledge-sharing expert community, and implementing sustainable AI implementation models in countries.

Learn more: www.who.int/teams/digital-health-and-innovation/harnessing-artificial-intelligence-for-health

Fides - a network of health influencers

Our Fides network, a community and a learning platform, empowers healthcare influencers to counteract disinformation and misinformation and share engaging content online.

Fides supports healthcare professionals on social media by providing tools, training and coordinated campaigns. By building a network of informed influencers, Fides extends the reach of reliable health advice to millions globally, making it a vital asset for countries seeking to influence health behaviours positively.

As Fides continues to grow, it provides Member States with a model for harnessing social media as a force for good in health communication.

Learn more: www.who.int/teams/digital-health-and-innovation/digital-channels/fides

Innovation hub

The WHO Innovation Hub focuses on strengthening public sector capacity to stimulate, assess and scale up new technologies and innovative approaches to solve public health challenges.

Through the Hub, WHO empowers governments and partners to collaboratively, systematically and sustainably scale-up innovations to achieve greater health impact. The Hub provides guidance and frameworks to assist countries in adopting these innovations effectively in specific local contexts.

Learn more: www.who.int/teams/digital-health-and-innovation/who-innovation-hub

Spotlight publications



Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health: Guidance on large multi-modal models

January 2024



Classification of digital interventions, services and applications in health

October 2023



Global strategy on digital health 2020-2025

August 2021



Digital implementation investment guide (DIIG): Integrating digital interventions into health programmes

September 2020



SMART Guidelines:

Machine-readable digital adaptations of WHO's guidelines, designed to support the accurate digital translation of our recommendations.

Get involved

There are many ways Member States, donors and partners can collaborate with WHO's work on digital health and innovation, including to:

- Join the **Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH)** to collaborate on building in-country digital health infrastructure. Reach out to gidh@who.int
- Join the **Global Digital Health Certification Network (GDHCN)** to verify health certificates internationally. For inquiries, please reach out to tng-secretariat@who.int (WHO Member States only)
- Contact dhi@who.int for support on **capacity building and training** to enhance digital health competencies.
- Contact innovation@who.int to engage with WHO's work on **innovation**, including on piloting and implementing innovation strategies in-country.
- Contact fides@who.int for support on **empowering healthcare influencers** to promote accurate health communication online.
- Contact smart@who.int for support on adapting **SMART guidelines** for local production of interoperable and scalable digital systems.

For all other collaboration queries or support, contact the department at dhi@who.int