

Digital Public Goods for AI (DPG4AI)

Narrative, Adopter Guidelines and Shortlist (Consultancy)

Type: Contract / Anticipated start date: August 2026 / Location: Remote – Global

1. Background and Context

The Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA) is a multi-stakeholder initiative with a mission to accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by facilitating the discovery, development, use of, and investment in digital public goods (DPGs).

According to the UN definition, digital public goods include open source software, open data, open content collections, and open AI systems that help attain the SDGs, adhere to privacy and other applicable laws, do no harm by design, and meet the DPG Standard.

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to reshape global digital landscapes, there is a critical need to ensure these technologies are accessible, transparent, and equitable. To this end, the DPGA Secretariat is pursuing two complementary approaches:

- In 2025, the DPGA Secretariat updated the DPG Standard for AI systems, requiring, among other aspects, full disclosure of the training dataset.
- In mid-2026, the DPGA Secretariat launched a collection of digital public goods for responsible AI development (DPG4AI).

The DPG4AI collection aims to make critical AI development resources broadly accessible, with a focus on:

- Equity and inclusion, specifically regarding applicability in low-resource contexts
- Adoption readiness, meaning active maintenance and a public governance model
- Responsible practices, including privacy and safety-by-design practices that go beyond the DPG Standard
- Interoperability, such as the use of standards and a tool's ability to integrate with other DPGs
- Sovereignty, e.g., support for local alignment and customisation or on-premise deployment

Objectives of the DPG4AI collection:

- Elevate Visibility: Amplify DPGs that drive the ethical and responsible development of AI in support of the SDGs.

- Illustrate Impact: Feature adoption stories and best practices to show how DPGs can enable responsible AI development.
- Help Map the Ecosystem: Provide an overview of AI-relevant DPGs to help navigate the open source AI ecosystem, especially for underrepresented languages and domains, and identify gaps.

The DPG4AI collection is co-stewarded with the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC), the Open Data Institute (ODI), and Digital Futures Lab.

2. Objective of the Consultancy

Following the collection launch, the DPGA Secretariat would like to develop a comprehensive narrative, adopter guidelines, and a shortlist of 10–15 open source solutions with high potential for the DPG4AI collection. The objective of this consultancy is to engage a consultant (or consulting team) to research, develop, and draft the narrative, adopter guidelines, and shortlist.

3. Scope of Work

The consultant will work closely with the DPGA Secretariat team throughout this assignment, with regular check-ins at a cadence to be agreed at inception. The consultant is expected to produce the following key activities and deliverables:

Inception Report

Before substantive research begins, the consultant will submit a short inception report setting out the detailed methodology, interview plan, and research framework for Parts 1–3 below, for DPGA Secretariat review and sign-off.

- Part 1: The DPG4AI Narrative

The objective is to describe at what levels of the AI stack DPGs are a viable option, and how DPGs specifically, and open source solutions more broadly, can drive sovereignty, cost-efficiency, and innovation, and reduce the AI divide by addressing barriers such as edge and low-resource context deployments, linguistic diversity, cultural alignment, and interoperability (the benefits and "why" of using DPGs in the AI context). This section should draw on the DPG4AI selection criteria. The narrative should be a 2-page document that makes the most compelling arguments for DPG4AI, supported by evidence from desk research and, where feasible, illustrative examples.

The consultant is expected to conduct desk research and a small number of interviews (2–5) with DPGA members and core partners.

Deliverable: 2-page narrative, evidence-based, with examples.

- Part 2: The DPG4AI Adopter Guidelines

The guidelines serve as a practical, blueprint-driven guide for ecosystem actors (governments, civil society, and entrepreneurs) looking to adopt DPGs from the DPG4AI collection. They provide the "how-to" mechanics for integrating these DPGs into an AI development pipeline, and should align with EkStep's 100 Pathways Initiative — a framework

for designing scalable, reusable adoption pathways across sectors and geographies.

The adopter guidelines will include:

- Step-by-step methodologies for adapting and deploying DPGs from the collection, detailing how to configure these digital assets to fit into broader national or sectoral "pathways," ensuring interoperability, data privacy, and localised relevance.
- 2–3 convincing, high-impact case studies: deep dives into real-world implementations where these DPGs have successfully contributed to an AI-powered product advancing the public interest, ideally as part of a DPI approach.
- An actionable analysis of how to scale these use cases from localised pilots to mainstreamed solutions.
- Lessons learned: a synthesised collection of insights from early adopters, detailing technical, regulatory, and cultural hurdles and ways to overcome them.

The consultant is expected to work with DPG product owners and implementers (developers, government representatives, NGOs) of solutions from the DPG4AI collection to identify adoption pathways, including concrete steps, lessons learned, and scaling opportunities.

Deliverable: 15–20 page adopter guidelines, including 2–3 case studies.

- **Part 3: Shortlist of Potential Open Source Solutions for the DPG4AI Collection**

The consultant is expected to provide a list of 10–15 open source solutions relevant to at least one stage of the AI lifecycle that offer a good fit against the DPG Standard and the DPG4AI collection criteria. To make the list, the consultant will conduct a pre-assessment of candidate solutions using the DPG Standard Eligibility Tool and the DPG4AI collection criteria checklist. This list should be informed by desk research and insights from a small number of interviews (2–5) with members and partners.

Deliverable: One shortlist of 10–15 open source solutions.

All deliverables will be published under an open license (e.g., CC BY 4.0), consistent with DPGA's own open-content practice.

The results of this consultancy will be presented at the DPGA's Annual Members Meeting in Paris, November 17–19, 2026.

4. Deliverables and Timeline

Deliverable	Description	Timeline	Payment
Inception Report	Detailed methodology and research framework	End of August 2026	10%

Deliverable	Description	Timeline	Payment
Narrative	Compelling arguments, underpinned by evidence and examples, for the DPG4AI approach	Mid-September 2026	30%
Adopter Guidelines	Step-by-step methodologies, 2–3 high-impact case studies, scaling pathways, lessons learned	End of October 2026	40%
Shortlist	10–15 open source solutions with high potential for inclusion in the DPG4AI collection	Early November 2026	20%

5. Budget

The maximum budget for this consultancy is **\$22,000 USD**, inclusive of all taxes and operational costs.

6. Qualifications

Consultant(s) bidding on this contract should have the following technical and professional capacity:

- Expertise in AI and open source ecosystems: Minimum of 7–10 years of experience in AI policy, software development, or research, with a deep understanding of the AI development lifecycle and the open source AI ecosystem.
- AI trust and safety: Practical experience or research background in AI safety testing, benchmarking, or red-teaming, ideally with a specific focus on non-English languages and culturally inclusive datasets.
- Experience in Global Majority contexts: Proven track record of working on open source AI research or implementation projects in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), specifically addressing cultural and linguistic diversity and limited infrastructure, institutional, and skills capacity.
- In-depth knowledge of digital public goods: Strong familiarity with the DPG Standard and the DPGA ecosystem.
- Research and analytical rigour: Demonstrated ability to conduct high-level research on emerging technical trends (e.g., small language models, orchestration), including desk

research and data gathering via interviews.

- Stakeholder management and co-design: Proven experience "co-evolving" research outputs with adoption partners, including government agencies, NGOs, or local developer communities, to ensure relevance and practical applicability.
- Strategic communication: Superior writing skills with a portfolio of published reports or white papers that bridge the gap between technical language and policy-making.

7. Tender Instructions and Procedure

Applicants will be assessed on price, quality, and ability to deliver on the requirements. All those bidding on this contract are asked to provide, and will be assessed on, the following:

- A cover letter including a list of relevant project references.
- A proposal on the number of days required to complete each set of deliverables described in this ToR, including a proposed daily rate and total contract cost if successful.

Applications must be submitted by August 9th, 2026. We thank all applicants for their interest, but only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

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