



How To

A Guide to Successful Tool Handover

JengaLab



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A GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL TOOL HANDOVER

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The Digital Advisory Support Services for Accelerated Rural Transformation (DAS) Program is a facility funded by a grant from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The DAS consortium of partners includes Development Gateway: an IREX Venture, TechChange, and JengaLab.

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BACKGROUND

The Digital Advisory Support Services for Accelerated Rural Transformation (DAS Program) is a facility funded by a grant from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD.) Development Gateway, an IREX Venture, Tech Change, and JengaLab comprise the IFAD-DAS consortium of partners. The DAS program, funded by the IFAD-DAS consortium of partners, aims to provide smallholder farmers across Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia with better access to digital tools and information. The program reduces existing information gaps in agricultural sectors and supports the development of appropriate digital tools via rapid advisory deployments to countries in the aforementioned regions.

In late 2022, the IFAD-DAS team assessed how several IFAD-funded projects (such as SAPP, TRADE, PRIDE, and FARMSE) could be provided with better support. Following this assessment, the following handover guide - designed to help future IFAD project teams sustainably hand over digital tools and systems to project beneficiaries - was created.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUSTAINABLE TOOL HANDOVER PROCESS

Digital tools are often developed as part of large projects funded by a development cooperation partner. The handover of these tools is the last phase of a project management life cycle. Whenever a project is complete, the tools are transferred to a target owner such as a government ministry. The handover marks the completion of delivery and the start of the closure stage of a project.

In the agricultural context, a handover refers to the transfer of knowledge, skills, and technology related to a digital agricultural system (tool) from a developer to a user in a way that is financially, institutionally, environmentally, technologically, and socially sustainable (FIETS-model¹).

¹ RVO Netherlands [FIETS model](#) for sustainable project management

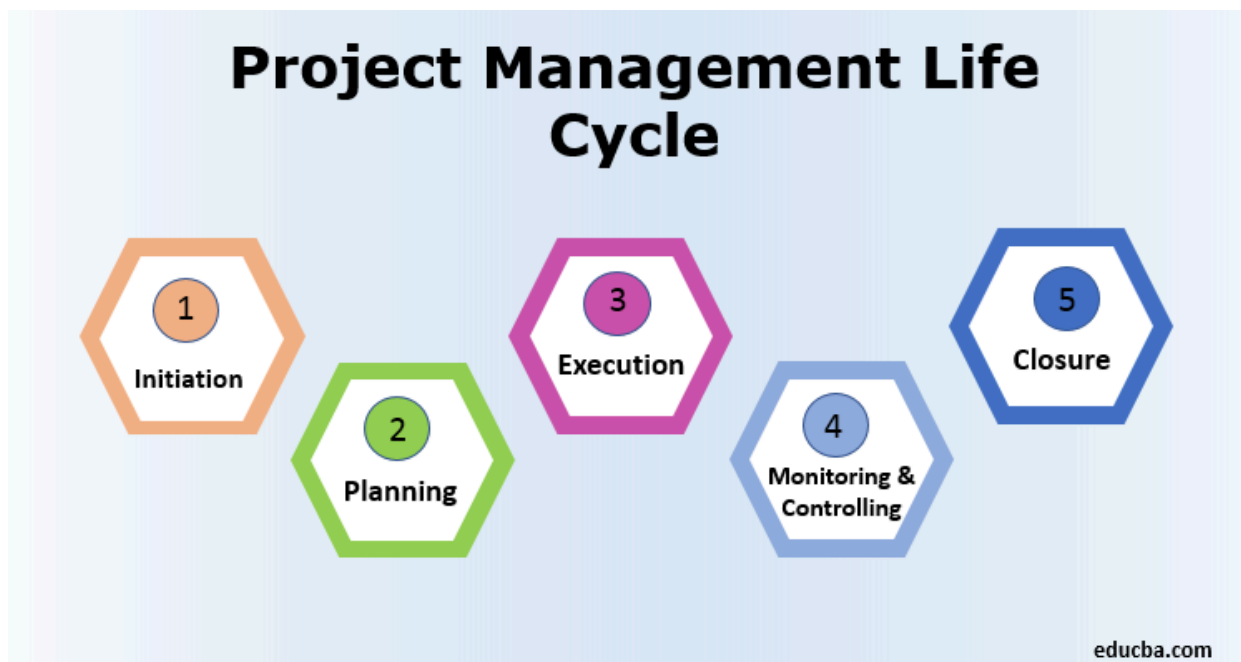


Figure 1 Project Management Life Cycle²

Ensuring that a new user is adequately trained on the use and maintenance of a tool, and guaranteeing that a tool is appropriate for a user's specific needs and context, are additional components of the handover process. The developer also assesses the environmental impact of a tool and ensures that it is not used in ways that harm or deplete natural resources during handover. Ultimately, a successful sustainable tool handover improves the productivity and efficiency of a user and promotes environmentally-friendly and socially responsible farming practices. This guide aims to provide practical advice and best practices during the handover process.

WHY SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

Ensuring the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of digital tools and platforms is essential during the handover process. Typically, a digital tool or platform is developed and implemented with a specific set of goals and objectives in mind, such as improving access to information, increasing productivity, or enhancing the quality of services. However, a tool may become obsolete or irrelevant and fail to achieve its intended objective if it is not sustained and maintained over time. Sustainability is an important aspect because business owners or end users are often better positioned to ensure the long-term effectiveness of a tool developed by a project team.. In particular, end users are more likely to take ownership of a tool and use it effectively over the long term if they are actively involved in its design, development, and implementation (in other words, if a project team takes a user-centric approach). This involvement can help ensure that a tool is adapted to the local context and responsive to the needs of its users.. Indeed, a tool will often fail after handover if it is developed in a technology-centered manner that does not address the needs of the end user.

² [EduCBA](#) Project Management Life cycle

Finance is also an important consideration from a sustainability standpoint. Because digital tools and platforms require ongoing maintenance, they may become unsustainable over time if the cost of support is not factored into the project budget. By planning for sustainability from a project's outset, it is possible to ensure that a tool remains viable and effective over the long term and delivers constant benefits to end users and other stakeholders. According to the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), sustainability is chiefly affected by poorly designed business models that do not take account of the end user and use the wrong pricing, payment, or communication strategies. Profit is not the central focus of a sustainable business model (as an agricultural tool or platform may only be relevant to governments).³ Rather, a sustainable business model is one that generates enough revenue from various sources to cover the costs incurred by an organization.⁴

Sustainability is also critical for building local capacity and empowering end users. When end users are actively involved in the design, development, and implementation of a tool, they are able to build their own technical and organizational capacity and become self-sufficient over time. They can thus promote local ownership and empowerment and ensure that a tool continues to be used effectively even after a project has ended.

GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY⁵

Sustainability management is a participatory process that includes all stakeholders. Sustainability should be addressed across three different phases of a project:

- During the design phase, an IFAD-DAS team must ensure that the conditions for sustainability are set before project completion. The team must:
 - Assess the needs and/or expectations of all key stakeholders, including each end user segment and the digital ecosystem (procedural, legislative, regulatory, and institutional) in which the digital tool will operate.
 - Identify the results to be achieved by the digital tool by project completion.
 - Identify the conditions that are required to sustain the delivery of services to each customer segment, including smallholder farmers, beyond project completion.
 - Calculate the total cost of ownership for the digital tool or platform beyond handover, and sort costs into capital and operating expenditures. Governments often require such estimates before a tool or platform handover.⁶
 - Identify the risks to achieving sustainability readiness by project completion and outline actions to mitigate these risks.
 - Formulate a plan detailing the conditions that represent sustainability readiness, the indicators that signify that these conditions have been achieved, and the actions that need to be taken to achieve these conditions on or before the point of project completion.
 - Integrate the elements of the sustainability plan into the solution design
- The sustainability plan should be executed during the implementation phase. Progress toward sustainability readiness should be actively monitored during this phase, and any necessary corrective actions taken to achieve readiness at project completion.

³ [ICT Works](#): The Number One Indicator of ICT4D Project Financial Sustainability (2019)

⁴ DIAL: [Beyond Scale](#) (2017)

⁵ CTA (2016) [Managing the sustainability of digital agriculture projects](#)

⁶ Dimagi developed a [tool](#) to calculate the Total Cost of Ownership for mobile solutions

- The project close-off phase entails the verification of sustainability readiness (including the adequacy of post-completion arrangements). It is important to check all the conditions for sustainability, including softer/non-financial ones such as “strategic linkages established” or “all related intellectual property is adequately protected.”

THE PRINCIPLES OF DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

The [Principles of Digital Development](#) are a set of best practices and guidelines for the creation of digital tools and systems in the context of international development. These principles are important because they help ensure that digital tools and systems are designed and implemented in ways that are effective, sustainable, and inclusive.



Figure 2 Principles of Digital Development

By following these principles, development practitioners can maximize the impact and value of their digital development projects. Handover is an important part of the digital development process, as it helps ensure that digital tools and systems are sustained and maintained over the long term. By incorporating local capacity and ownership into the handover process, developers can ensure that the tool continues to be used effectively after the initial implementation phase. This aspect is especially important in the context of international development, where digital tools and systems are often implemented in resource-constrained environments where technical expertise and infrastructure may be limited. The following principles are especially important for successful tool handover:

- **Design with the User:** Successful tool handover requires a deep understanding of the needs and preferences of end users. By involving end users in the design and development process from the outset, developers can ensure that the tool meets their needs and is user-friendly.
- **Design for Scale:** For handover to be successful, technical and business capacity needs to be built within the government and/or private sector. Such capacity not only ensures that a tool can be designed for scale; it also guarantees that the tool can continue to be used after implementation. Tools can thus have a greater impact as they can be scaled to reach more users.

- **Build for Sustainability:** Prior to handover, project teams should build for sustainability by planning for ongoing maintenance, support, and updates. This effort includes developing user manuals and training materials, providing capacity building support, and planning for monitoring and evaluation (to ensure a tool is being used effectively).
- **Be Data Driven:** A data-driven assessment of a tool must be undertaken to ensure it is designed and implemented effectively prior to handover. To further ensure sustainability following handover, a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process must also be conducted to ensure effective use of a tool and identify areas for improvement.
- **Use Open Standards, Open Data, Open Source Platforms, and Open Innovation Practices:** For sustainability purposes, open source tools and open data platforms should be utilized to guarantee that a tool is accessible and usable by a wide range of stakeholders. Open innovation practices, which can also be used to involve stakeholders in the design and implementation of a tool, can help build buy-in and ensure sustainability.
- **Reuse and Improve:** An important component of sustainability pertains to the reuse and improvement of existing tools and approaches, rather than the development of alternatives from scratch. Such reuse and improvement can save time and resources and ensure that a tool is built on a solid foundation of existing knowledge and expertise. The Principles for digital development were refreshed in 2024 and can be found on this link <https://digitalprinciples.org/>

CHALLENGES IN DIGITAL TOOL HANDOVER

In agriculture and other sectors, the handover of digital tools at the end of a project can face a myriad of challenges, including:

- **Ownership Challenges:** If proposed business owners are not involved in project design and implementation, but are instead engaged at a later stage, the transfer of ownership might fail and the tool handover may not be successful.
- **Capacity Challenges:** If training is inadequate or if trained staff are transferred, there might not be sufficient local capacity to maintain and sustain the digital tool or platform after handover. This will cause a failure of the handover.
- **Financial Challenges:** If a business model is inadequate or a government did not budget properly to maintain and sustain a tool, the handover process might not be successful.
- **Poor Quality Handover Documentation:** If handover documentation is incomplete or of low quality, staff may find it difficult to maintain and sustain a tool or platform.
- **Lack of User Acceptance and Adoption:** End users such as farmers may not accept or adopt digital tools, even if they are technically sound and capacity exists to maintain them. User acceptance can be influenced by cultural or social factors as well as perceptions of the value and usefulness of digital tools.
- **Other Constraints:** Power cuts, lack of connectivity, high data costs, and digital illiteracy could all hamper the continued use of a tool by end users.

FEATURES OF A SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL TOOL HANDOVER

Successful tool handover requires careful collaboration, capacity building, and sustainability planning to ensure that the tools are effectively transferred to local stakeholders and are sustained over the long

term. By following best practices for tool handover, development practitioners can ensure that their investments in digital tools have a lasting impact and contribute to the sustainable development of local communities. To achieve successful digital tool handover, the factors below are very important:

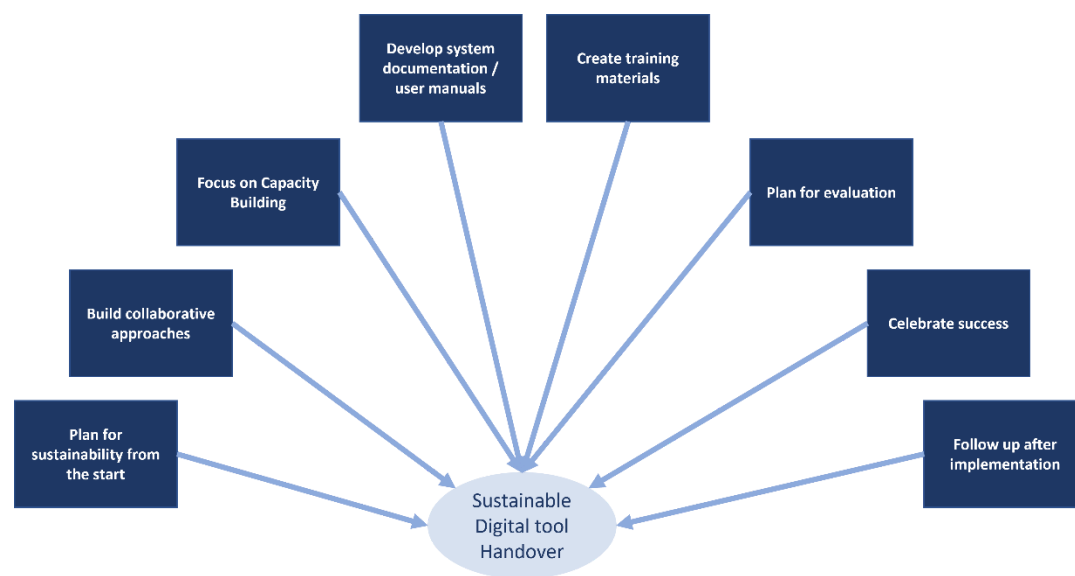


Figure 3: Factors for achieving a sustainable tool handover (Smart Resultancy 2023)

- **Plan for Sustainability from the Start:**⁷ Project teams should adopt a user-centric approach that addresses user needs and risk factors from the outset. Taking collaborative approaches and focusing on capacity building from the start is necessary to ensure maximum ownership.
- **Build Collaborative Approaches:** In the agricultural context, engagement and collaboration with stakeholders is essential for successful digital tool handover. Collaboration with stakeholders such as farmers, agribusinesses, government agencies, local technology providers, and civil society organizations can help identify the most appropriate tools and technologies for the local context. It can also ensure that the handover process follows the FIETS-model.⁸
- **Focus on Capacity Building:** Capacity building is essential for a successful handover. It includes building business capacity for data analysis, managing technology transfer, and educating trainers. It is also important to have a sustainability plan based on the initial assessment.
- **Develop System Documentation/User Manuals:** User manuals should be developed during implementation and updated regularly. The manual should include information on how to use the tool, troubleshoot problems, and follow best practices. (an end-user manual and administrator manual is recommended).
- **Create Training Materials:** Videos and demos can be used to supplement user manuals and sustain capacity building. Refresher training may be needed before the handover.
- **Plan for Evaluation:** Plan for M&E activities during project budgeting. M&E activities can include technical analyses of a system to learn how it is being used.
- **Celebrate Success:** Celebrate the success of the project with final training sessions, the official handover of ownership (hardware/software/intellectual property), certifications, launches, and

⁷ [Build for Sustainability](#) – Principles of digital Development

⁸ [Netherlands Enterprise Agency Sustainability model](#)

media engagements. Project leads should take the time to officially hand over the project to the stakeholders who will continue the work. Even if the stakeholders taking ownership have been closely involved in the project, it is good practice to formally deliver a project closure or handover report. Project leads should outline the next steps and ongoing processes that need action and get sign-off from relevant parties.⁹

- **Follow-Up After Implementation:** Project leads should check in with end users after the handover and provide follow-up training if needed.

THE FOCUS ON CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building is an important component of successful tool handover as it ensures that end users are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to use and maintain the tool effectively over the long term.

- **Business Capacity Building:** This involves building the capacity of the government or private sector to effectively use data generated by the tool for decision-making purposes. This aspect may include providing training on data analysis and visualization as well as developing processes and workflows for using data effectively.
- **Technical Capacity Building:** This involves building the capacity of the government or private sector to effectively use the tool itself. This may entail training users on how to collect, clean, and store data using the tool and troubleshoot any issues that may arise. Because training by itself may not be sufficient, project leads should also establish ongoing monitoring and supervision sessions.
- **Instruction of Trainers:** To ensure that capacity building efforts are sustainable over the long term, project teams must establish a core group of trainers who can educate new users, even after the handover is complete.
- **Institutional Capacity Building:** This involves building the capacity of the institution or organization that will be responsible for maintaining and supporting the tool over the long term. This may entail training institutional members on how to provide technical support, maintain and update the tool, and plan for future improvements or updates.
- **Financial Capacity Building:** This involves building the capacity of the government or private sector to fund the ongoing maintenance and support of the tool. This may include developing a sustainability plan that identifies the necessary resources and funding sources to support the tool over the long term.

Tools to Support Capacity Building:

- **Initial Assessment:** The initial assessment should include a review of end users' technical and organizational capacities, including their experience with similar tools or technologies, their level of expertise, and any gaps or challenges that need to be addressed. This assessment can help inform the development of a capacity building plan that is tailored to the specific needs of end users.
- **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis:** A SWOT analysis can be a useful tool for identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that may

⁹ Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT/ESCAP)

impact the successful implementation and sustainability of the tool. By conducting a SWOT analysis, end users can gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that they may face and develop strategies for mitigating risks and addressing capacity gaps.

- **Capacity Checklist:** A capacity checklist can ensure that all key capacity building activities are addressed and help track progress over time. The checklist can include items such as training needs assessments, development of training materials, identification of training providers, training delivery timelines, and follow-up support.

EXAMPLES OF SUSTAINABLE TOOL HANDOVERS

- [EzyAgric in Uganda:](#) EzyAgric is a mobile-based platform that connects farmers with extension services, inputs, and markets. In 2018, the platform was handed over to the Government of Uganda to help improve agricultural productivity and food security in the country.
- [Aid Management Platform Côte d'Ivoire \(AMP CIV\):](#) AMP CIV is a platform that controls and centralizes all information on official development assistance to increase transparency of aid flows. During the development process, significant emphasis was placed on collaboration, capacity building, and sustainability planning to ensure that the platform could be effectively transferred to local stakeholders and sustained over the long term. A “Train-the-trainer” approach was used to empower the local AMP team to coach others. Following co-creation efforts with stakeholders from different ministries during the early stages of the project, engagement and commitment rose and responsibility and ownership was fully transferred to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire. Six months after the project ended, a process analysis was performed to identify challenges and highlight good practices for AMP usage.
- [Le Hub Rural in Senegal:](#) Le Hub Rural is a web-based platform that provides farmers in Senegal with access to market information, weather forecasts, and agricultural extension services. The platform was developed by the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union.
- [M-Farm in Kenya:](#) M-Farm is a mobile app that helps small-scale farmers in Kenya connect with buyers, manage their inventory, and access market prices. In 2019, the app was handed over to the farmers themselves, who formed a cooperative to manage the app and ensure its sustainability.
- [SmartAgri in Mali:](#) SmartAgri is an agricultural management software application that helps farmers in Mali administer their operations, including crop planning, inventory management, and supply chain management. The application, which was developed by the Malian government with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was handed over to the government for ongoing management and support.
- [Smart Nkunganire System \(SNS\) in Rwanda:](#) The World Bank, in collaboration with the Rwandan Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, funded the development of a digital tool called SNS. SNS helps smallholder farmers access agricultural inputs and services, such as fertilizers and seeds, through a voucher system. Ongoing capacity-building activities and training sessions for local stakeholders ensure the long-term sustainability of the tool.
- [Egypt's Smart Irrigation Project:](#) The Egyptian government, in collaboration with international organizations, launched a smart irrigation project aimed at conserving water resources in the

agricultural sector. The project uses digital tools like remote sensors, geographic information systems, and mobile applications to help farmers monitor and optimize their water usage.

- [Remote Sensing for Agriculture in India](#): The Indian Space Research Organization, in partnership with the World Bank, developed an agricultural monitoring system called Bhuvan. This web-based platform utilizes satellite data and remote sensing technologies to provide timely and accurate information on crop growth, agricultural productivity, and weather conditions. Technology transfers and capacity-building initiatives are carried out to ensure the platform's long-term success and maintenance.
- [Agronet in Georgia](#): The UNDP partnered with the Georgian government to develop AgroNet. AgroNet is an e-agriculture portal that provides Georgian farmers with information about agricultural practices, market prices, weather forecasts, and financing opportunities. The platform is intended to improve productivity, reduce losses, and increase market access for Georgian farmers. The handover process involved not only the transfer of technology but also the carrying out capacity-building initiatives (such as training local stakeholders to operate and maintain the platform).

DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Sustainability planning is a critical component of a successful tool handover. Sustainability planning involves developing a plan to ensure that a tool can be maintained, supported, and updated after implementation, and the necessary resources are in place to ensure sustainability:

- **Identifying Local Stakeholders:** Identification of local stakeholders who will be responsible for maintaining and expanding the tool over the long term is the first step of a sustainability plan (to create ownership). This step can include government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community-based organizations.
- **Identify the Resources Needed:** This step identifies the human, technical, and financial resources needed to support a tool over the long term. It is important to identify these resources early in the process to ensure that they are available when the handover occurs.
- **Plan for Maintenance and Updates:** Maintenance and updates are critical for the ongoing functionality and effectiveness of a tool. A sustainability plan should include a blueprint for regular maintenance and updates, as well as a mechanism for identifying and addressing any issues that arise.
- **Ensure Access to Technical Support:** Technical support is critical for ensuring that a tool can be used effectively over the long term. A sustainability plan should include a strategy for providing ongoing technical support to users.
- **Building the Capacity of Local Stakeholders:** Local stakeholders should be provided with training and capacity building support to ensure the sustained and effective use of a tool. These stakeholders should also be engaged in the design and development of the tool.
- **Plan for Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation activities are critical for identifying areas for improvement and ensuring that a tool is achieving its intended outcomes. A sustainability plan should thus include a plan for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the tool is being used effectively and achieving its intended impact.

USER MANUALS

A good user manual should provide clear and concise instructions on how to use a tool effectively. A good user manual should be written in plain language and avoid technical jargon as much as possible. A manual should also be regularly updated as a tool evolves and new features are added.

Building a user manual during implementation is a good practice. By building the manual during implementation, you can ensure that it is tailored to the specific features and functions of a tool and regularly updated to reflect changes and improvements to the tool. This can help users more effectively learn how to use the tool and troubleshoot any issues that may arise. Below are some steps for building a user manual during implementation:

- **Create an Initial Draft:** As a tool is developed, create an initial draft of the user manual that details the features and functions that are currently available.
- **Incorporate Feedback:** As users begin to use the tool, collect feedback on the user manual and the tool itself. Use this feedback to make improvements to the user manual and the tool.
- **Add new features and functions:** As new features and functions are developed for the tool, update the user manual to include these changes.
- **Review and edit:** Regularly review and edit the user manual to ensure that it is accurate and up to date.
- **Test the User Manual:** Before handing over the tool, test the user manual to ensure that it is easy to follow and provides clear instructions for using the tool.
- **Include Training Materials:** In addition to the user manual, include training materials such as videos or live training sessions to help users learn how to use the tool effectively.

TRAINING MATERIALS

Videos and demos can be a valuable addition to a user manual, as they can provide users with a more engaging and interactive way to learn about the tool or platform. Including videos and demos in the user manual can help:

- **Enhance User Engagement:** Videos and demos can help increase user engagement with the tool or platform, as they provide a more interactive and engaging way to learn about its features and functionality.
- **Improve User Understanding:** Videos and demos can help to improve users' understanding of the tool or platform, as they provide visual and auditory cues that can help reinforce key concepts and processes.
- **Support Self-Paced Learning:** Videos and demos can be accessed by users at their own pace and on their own time. This supports self-paced learning and ongoing capacity building.
- **Incorporate Videos in the User Manual:** To incorporate videos and demos into the user manual, create them alongside the development of the manual itself. For example, as new features or functionality are developed for the tool or platform, corresponding videos and demos can be created to help users learn how to use them effectively. These videos and demos can then be included in the user manual, alongside written instructions and screenshots.
- **Tips for Videos:** When creating videos and demos, keep them short, clear, and focused on specific features or functionality. They should be accessible, easy to understand, and available in multiple formats (such as online video, downloadable files, or printed materials).

CELEBRATING A SUCCESSFUL TOOL HANDOVER

Celebrating a successful tool handover is an important way of recognizing the hard work and dedication of a team involved in a project; it also creates a sense of accomplishment and pride among stakeholders. Here are some ideas for celebrating a successful tool handover:

- **Final Training Sessions:** Consider organizing a final training session to formally hand over the tool to end users, and provide them with comprehensive instructions on how to use the tool effectively.
- **Certifications:** Consider awarding certifications to the end users who successfully complete the final training session. This can help to create a sense of accomplishment and recognition among end users and incentivize them to continue using the tool effectively.
- **Official Handover Documents:** Take the time to officially hand over the tool to the stakeholders who will continue the work. Even if the stakeholders taking ongoing ownership have been closely involved in the project, it is good practice to formally exchange a project closure report or handover report. Make sure the next steps and ongoing processes that need improvement are outlined.
- **Launches/Media Engagements:** Consider organizing a launch event to formally introduce the tool to the wider community, and engage with local media outlets to generate interest and excitement about the tool.
- **Showcasing of Success Stories:** Consider creating a collection of success stories and case studies that showcase how the tool has been successfully used by end users, and share these stories with the wider community through social media, websites, or other platforms.
- **Stakeholder Appreciation:** Consider organizing an appreciation event to thank the various stakeholders who contributed to the success of the project, including the development team, end users, and other partners and supporters.

EVALUATION/AFTER IMPLEMENTATION

After a tool handover, evaluate its impact and effectiveness to identify any areas for improvement and ensure that the tool is meeting the needs of its users. Here are some steps for conducting an evaluation/after implementation review:

- **Plan for M&E from the Outset:** Ensure that the project budget includes funding for M&E activities, and verify that appropriate M&E indicators and tools are developed during the implementation phase.
- **Conduct a Process Analysis:** Evaluating the technical and organizational aspects of a tool as well as the process by which it was implemented and handed over. This can help identify any technical issues, training gaps, or other challenges that need to be addressed.
- **Conduct a User Satisfaction Survey:** Gather feedback from end users about their experiences with the tool, including its ease of use, effectiveness, and relevance. This can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the tool is meeting the needs of its users.

- **Conduct a Technical Analysis:** Evaluate the performance and functionality of the tool, including its reliability, scalability, and security. This can help identify any technical issues that need to be addressed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the tool.
- **Provide Follow-up Training and Support:** Based on the results of the evaluation, provide follow-up training and support to end users to address any identified gaps or challenges.
- **Incorporate Feedback into the Sustainability Plan:** Based on the results of the evaluation, revise the sustainability plan to ensure that the tool is sustainable and effective over the long term.

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