

Development of Practical Procurement Tooling for Digital Public Goods (DPGs) (Consultancy)

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Agreement Overview

Type: Short-term contract

Location: Remote - Global

Duration: October 2026 - March 2027

Application Closing Date: October 5, 2026

Background

The Digital Public Goods Alliance is a multi-stakeholder, UN-endorsed initiative and global non-profit that facilitates the discovery, development, adoption, and investment in digital public goods (DPGs) to accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. The DPGA Secretariat is a dynamic, international team dedicated to operating with transparency, openness, and integrity to unlock the potential of open-source technologies.

While robust policy guidelines exist for procuring DPGs and other open-source software—such as the World Bank's recent Technical Procurement Guidance for DPI (see annex below)—national procurement officers, Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) Task Teams and UN agencies that support country implementation of DPI and DPGs often lack the practical administrative tools to implement these guidelines. Fear of violating "technology neutrality" principles, rigid financial evaluation models, and a lack of standardised contractual

safeguards often lead to the procurement of proprietary systems by default, or the creation of unsustainable, customised open-source "forks."

Through its work, the Centre for Digital Public Infrastructure (CDPI) has started to address these challenges by developing key legal clauses for DPI implementation agreements with countries. CDPI's approach focuses on the pre-award phase—leveraging country negotiation power prior to contract award—to enforce anti-forking provisions, ensure mandatory upstream code contributions, and establish bilateral L3 agreements/training programs that direct implementation funds back to core DPG maintainers. Building on CDPI's foundational work, this Consultancy aims to further operationalise, expand, and standardise these contractual and administrative mechanisms to ensure consistent, scalable upstream funding and long-term sustainability of DPGs.

Purpose of Contract

To support the scaling and sustainable maintenance of safe, interoperable and inclusive digital public infrastructure, as well as enabling joint action against challenges such as climate change, there is (1) a critical need to operationalise existing DPG procurement guidelines into actionable, workflow-integrated tools that (2) help to sustain DPGs by channelling contributions back to the core. This contract commissions a suite of practical procurement assets that national procurement officers can use directly in their daily operations and that address points (1) and (2).

These tools will enable governments to legally and safely procure DPGs, enforce technology neutrality through functional requirements, mitigate vendor lock-in, and legally channel funding toward upstream maintenance and capacity building. Such tools must account for the constraints of LMICs, be tailored to these contexts, and not be overly prescriptive to allow adaptation across contexts. Moreover, the tools need to be applicable for large-scale procurements, e.g., for digital public goods for digital public infrastructure (DPI) projects, and, where suitable, consider different asset classes such as software and AI systems.

Concretely, these tools should advance the following strategic objectives:

Sustain DPGs Upstream: Ensure DPGs are compensated through procurement strategies for core activities, including ongoing security, maintenance, and updates. For instance, this could build upon bilateral L3 agreements or DPG-Service Provider training program models, implementation tariffs, or 'Contribute-or-Pay' offsets that create legal mechanisms for public funds to compensate core maintainers and incentivise continuous software contributions.

Preserve Long-Term Interoperability and Digital Sovereignty of Purchasers: Ensure that vendors align with global upstream releases and share assets such as data, code, model weights, and outputs (if AI) to mitigate vendor lock-in. This could include expanding CDPI's contract terms that prohibit unapproved proprietary forks, require mandatory code contribution back to the DPG core (with prioritised DPG merging), or mandate bilateral code release directly to the host country based on their choice.

Cultivate Local IT Capacity and Community Engagement: Ensure that procurement is used as a strategic lever for local capacity development, e.g., by structuring bidding and evaluation criteria in a way that favours local suppliers, holding recognised certification as a local vendor partner or requiring concrete knowledge transfer activities by international system integrators to benefit the local ecosystem. Capacity development activities should focus on ensuring continued L3/L4 support without placing the burden on the core DPG team (the bottleneck).

Institutionalise Standardised, Tech-Neutral Procurement Mechanisms: Ensure that open-source benefits are secured without violating strict procurement rules requiring fair, open-market competition, e.g., by providing modular, compliant RFP templates and cost evaluation tools that enable contracting authorities to execute rules-compliant open-source acquisitions.

Scope of Work

The consultant will work closely with the Secretariat team during this assignment in order to: a) assess DPG procurement examples to identify hurdles and gaps; b) translate existing open-source procurement policies and guidelines into a set of recommended, actionable administrative tools; c) validate these tools with procurement specialists and legal teams; d) refine them based on real-world workflow constraints; and finally e) deliver a final toolkit as agreed with the DPGA Secretariat ready for deployment. The following activities are performed:

1. Inception and Needs Analysis

- Conduct a gap analysis mapping where traditional procurement workflows break down when applied to DPGs and open source, including the analysis of 2-3 DPG procurement cases to identify hurdles and gaps
- Review existing DPG/open-source procurement policies, guidelines, and legal frameworks—including CDPI's pre-award eligibility agreements, bilateral L3/training agreement frameworks, and anti-forking clauses (see Annex).
- Map existing tools and good practices/procurement strategies for OS procurements, if any are

available, based on the research conducted. This should also include country examples of building the local IT ecosystem to support DPG integrations.

- Summarise these results, develop an efficient methodology and work plan for tool creation and present it as an inception report to the DPGA Secretariat

2. Tool Development

- Suggest 3-5 actionable tools and procurement strategies that deliver on the aforementioned strategic objectives and are based on the analysis conducted under 1). Tools could include, for instance: modular, copy-and-paste RFP clauses, standard contract rules, and service agreement frameworks tailored for DPGs; an objective scoring system featuring clear bidding strategies and evaluation criteria to reward OS contributions & capacity development; and/or practical budgeting methods and cost calculation tools. Specify the maintenance work needed for each tool.
- Discuss and select up to 4 tools with the DPGA Secretariat team for further development, and specify the maintenance work needed for each tool
- Draft the content and workflows for the selected tools, and validate them with procurement specialists, open-source experts, and legal teams. Each tool should be reviewed by at least 2 experts, one of whom should be familiar with LMIC contexts.
- Refine these tools based on the feedback received, with a focus on real-world procurement workflows and constraints.
- Deliver a final toolkit with the previously selected tools formatted for immediate use
- Create a summary report that highlights key ecosystem challenges and provides recommendations for next steps and ongoing monitoring.

4. Deliverables and timeline

Deliverable	Description	Timeline	Payment
Inception report	Summary of gap analysis, methodology and workplan for tool development	Early November 2026	20%
Recommendations for 3-5 actionable tools	Menu of tool options for discussion with the DPGA Secretariat	Early December 2026	20%
Toolkit with up to 4 expert-reviewed and validated tools	Deployment-ready tools for procurement specialists	End of January 2027	40%
Summary report	Detailing learnings and next steps	Mid-February 2027	20%

5. Budget

The maximum budget for this consultancy is **\$30,000 USD**, inclusive of all taxes and operational costs.

6. Qualifications

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

1. Public Procurement & Legal Drafting

- Strong understanding of and background in national public procurement systems and Multilateral Development Bank (MDB/World Bank) guidelines.

- Proven track record drafting practical RFP boilerplate clauses, contract frameworks, and evaluation criteria while maintaining technology neutrality.

2. Open Source & Digital Public Goods (DPGs)

- Deep understanding of open-source software maintenance, DPG/DPI ecosystems, and open-source licensing.
- Expertise in strategies to prevent vendor lock-in and enable sustainable funding models for upstream maintainers.
- Understanding of local vendor capacity-building strategies and business models for open-source software developers, particularly in Global Majority contexts.

3. Research & Operational Tool Design

- Demonstrated experience in conducting gap analyses on public procurement workflows or qualitative research on procurement-related topics.
- Demonstrated ability to create user-friendly administrative tools (e.g., interactive templates, financial calculators).
- Proven ability to consult and validate tools with legal teams, procurement specialists, and open-source communities.
- Ability to deliver high-quality, evidence-based work in a completely remote work setting.

7. Tender instructions

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 October 5, 2026. We thank all applicants for their interest, but only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

Annex

List of existing open source procurement guidelines (non-exhaustive):

- The World Bank (2026): Technical Procurement Guidelines for Digital Public Infrastructure and Services:

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099042426124014450/pdf/P513116-d415556c-ccf2-4dc8-b872-8c57596c5b6b.pdf>

- The Inter-American Development Bank (2025): Open-Source Software Procurement
<https://publications.iadb.org/en/publications/english/viewer/Open-Source-Software-Procurement.pdf>
- Centre for Digital Public Infrastructure (2026): Key Legal Clauses to include in DPI Implementation Agreements with Countries

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