Ecosystem Research for Turning DIAL's Catalog into a Marketplace

digital impact alliance FOR A POSITIVE DIGITAL FUTURE

Synthesis Report on the Marketplace Research Study
November 2022

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Executive Summary

Digital technology is increasingly becoming recognized as a key ingredient of digital development initiatives[1], yet it remains a challenge to leverage tools equitably and efficiently in pursuit of digital transformation. DIAL (Digital Impact Alliance) works to identify barriers to the routine use of digital solutions and data by development actors, tests ways to remove them, and packages solutions for these actors to use in service delivery efforts.

DIAL's flagship product, the Catalog of Digital Solutions, is an extension of the SDG Digital Investment Framework and has been built to support the discovery, evaluation, guidance, and information-gathering process for digital tools and projects that support the achievement of the SDGs. Based on anecdotal evidence through surveys, workshops, and user interviews conducted in 2021, DIAL has found that there is an opportunity to expand the functionality of the platform to address next steps after the discovery of software tools, such as the procurement and implementation support. procurement issues beyond discoverability of software tools to support digital development. Specifically, that there is an appetite for the Catalog to address the following question, "I have found a product on the Catalog that I want to use, now what?"

Among the many questions DIAL has heard, users on the demand side of the Catalog want to know which tools can be used for their specific use cases, and how they can deploy the tool themselves or solicit the services of an implementer to do so. Users from the supply side – namely product owners or system integrators – want to know how they can showcase their tool or services to their consumers and how they can grow, scale, and access reliable revenue to support their business objectives.

Accordingly in 2022, DIAL launched a research project to gauge interest, feasibility, and feedback around turning the Catalog into a "Marketplace" of digital solutions. An online platform that connects buyers in demand of digital solutions (products or services) to suppliers and implementers of these solutions.

The research project is being conducted in two phases: Phase 1 focuses on: (i) defining the research learning agenda, (ii) conducting background research on existing Marketplaces and what features and functionalities they have, and (iii) stakeholder consultations to hear from the intended Marketplace users on their procurement pain-points and what features the Marketplace should prioritize to address their needs. Phase 2 will focus on: (i) addressing any research gaps, and (ii) developing the roadmap and robust product backlog needed to rebrand DIAL's Catalog to incorporate Marketplace types features and functionalities.

This report synthesizes the Phase 1 research findings the research team has collated to-date – through individual meetings, surveys and focus group sessions with the intended end users of the Marketplace. The objective has been to find out their pain-points and challenges, and the types of features and functionality that would be useful to them in the procurement process of digital solutions.

1 https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/

1 Objectives and Background

Since 2019, DIAL's **Catalog of Digital Solution** has garnered interest among stakeholders as a tool to promote the building blocks approach toward digital development. Yet, the reoccurring feedback observed in the past year from these stakeholders, is a need for a Marketplace type platform to connect the key actors in the digital development ecosystem – the buyers in demand of digital solutions (products or services) to suppliers and implementers of these solutions. As an organization dedicated to supporting the digital development ecosystem, DIAL plans to address thisneed. However, gaps remain in the understanding of how a Marketplace platform can provide maximum value to the ecosystem.

With support from GIZ, DIAL undertook a research project to **gauge interest, feasibility, and feedback around turning its Catalog into a "Marketplace" of digital solutions.** The overall **research question** for this study was: What is needed for the Catalog of Digital Solutions to become a Marketplace platform that enables global development actors to more easily procure, deploy, and use digital technologies and services that accelerate the whole-of-government approach?

Through this research project, DIAL aimed to understand the needs of the intended users of the Marketplace platform – **demand side actors** (public sector development actors: governments, international organizations, NGOs, and donors), as well as **suppliers and deployers of digital solutions and services** (system integrators, vendors, and product teams). The goal was to receive feedback from these stakeholders to ensure DIAL developed a **user-centered** Marketplace roadmap with features and functionality that can provide maximum value to the ecosystem.

As a result, the primary output of the research project will be a **product roadmap** that will be converted into features and functionality for the Marketplace platform in 2023.

This report provides a synthesis of the research findings. Several general themes emerged from the findings, and this report is organized around them. They include the capacity building gaps in the Digital Public Goods (DPG) ecosystem faced by demand and supply side actors, and an overview of the key proposed Marketplace features the research team has decided to prioritize – **RFP radar opportunities**, **vendor storefront**, and **comparison tool**.

1.1 Study Design

Ensuring a user centric research approach was a critical priority for this research project. Thus, DIAL prioritized consulting the following key intended users of the Marketplace platform and procurement experts with experience in the procurement of Digital Public Goods (DPGs):

- **Governments**: Representatives of government departments in countries that have prioritized digital transformation in their agenda. The focus was to target departments with a strong interest in ICT and digitalizing public sector services.
- **Donors**: Representatives of large providers of aid funding, bilateral donors, and foundations.
- **International organizations/NGOs**: Representatives of program teams in large international NGOs, UN agencies and smaller grassroots NGOs who implement services that make use of digital technologies in one way or another.

- **Private sector:** Vendors and system integrators deploying and implementing digital solutions. Also representative from incubators and accelerators helping tech companies to utilize open-source software.
- **Product teams/owners**: Representatives of primarily social mission-driven organizations that build, develop, provide, and support technology services. These include, among others, creators of mobile and web software, individuals responsible for tech and/or digital data within NGOs, providers of mobile data collection and information solutions, and providers of cloud-based applications and consulting services.
- **Procurement experts**: Specialists with experience facilitating the procurement of digital tools and services in the public sector.

From these categories, it is important to note that the only government officials directly consulted were those from Sierra Leone and Estonia. This is because these governments are already being engaged on other DIAL initiatives (Estonia through GovStack, and Sierra Leone through DIAL's country engagement team working with Sierra Leone to develop their Architecture Framework and Digital Transformation Strategy). However, other governments were indirectly consulted as the research team organized meetings and focus group sessions with GIZ Digital Ambassadors, UNDP Digital Advocates, and the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU). These organizations directly work with governments in low-and-middle income countries on their digital transformation journey and agenda.

Given the profile of stakeholders in this research study, the findings focused on addressing the demand and supply model in the DPG space. DIAL recognizes that the digital ecosystem is complex and that due to time constraints and limitations, not all voices can be consulted.

Finally, it is important to note that DIAL has not completed the consultation process for this research project. A priority for the month of October 2022, is to directly consult procurment teams/departments within governments, and large donor agencies such as GIZ, USAID, United Nations General Marketplace (UNGM), and/or the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). These consultants will focus on understanding how the Marketplace can support them to easily identify and acquire a larger pool of vendor applicants to implement and deploy the digital solutions they wish to procure. This report will be updated with results and findings from these consultations.

2 Methodology

A learning agenda and overarching analysis framework guided this study and the subsequent data collection tools and data analysis. The learning agenda structured qualitative research questions that focused on procurement pain-points, quality delivery of products and services, and capacity building needs in the digital ecosystem – with the intention of providing a rich and complementary data output on the types of features and functionalities the Marketplace should prioritize.

2.1 Data Collection Method

The Marketplace research project used a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative primary data with secondary desktop research to achieve the objectives of the study. In the findings section of this report (section 3), data that emanated from public sector development actors such as governments, donors, and international organizations refers **to demand side actors**. Data

collected from technology and service providers such as product teams, technologists, system integrators and vendors, refers to **supply side actors**.

2.1.1 Key Informant Consultations

The research team conducted 23 key informant qualitative individual consultations. The priority was to consult internal DIAL staff as well as key external stakeholders active in the digital ecosystem. These meetings targeted individuals in a wide range of geographies and organizational roles through snowball sampling. The target individuals were procurment experts, and senior level individuals from the public and private sector.

The format of these individual meetings was flexible and semi-structured. The objective was not to ask a list of interview questions but have an open discussion format that revolved around the following topics: pain-points and challenges in the procurement process of digital tools and products, and the types of features/functionalities an online market platform should prioritize to easily facilitate the procurement of digital solutions between demand and supply side actors in the digital development ecosystem.

This process began with the identification of initial digital development experts, who were asked to nominate ecosystem stakeholders known to them, increasing the sample size, and widening the scope of engagement. The research team used an ongoing gap analysis and referrals to complete the stakeholder consultation list. While there were challenges reaching the supply side actors and government officials on the demand side, the research team believes (validated by stakeholder feedback and a reference group) that there are sufficient and diverse voices represented in the study that provided critical and useful feedback to validate the need for such a Marketplace platform.

As depicted in the Appendix - Table 1, international organizations working directly on country engagement in the digital space were the most represented stakeholder groups, making up 41% of the cohort, followed by supply side actors (product teams and service providers) at 35%, and then donors at 15%. Direct consultation with government officials was the least represented making up 3%.

The geographic distribution mostly included organizations with a global presence and scope (~50%), and those based in Europe (~3%), Africa (~42%), and Asia (~5%).

2.1.2 Focus Groups

The research team organized eight stakeholder grouping focus group sessions in total. A session respectively with tech incubators/accelerators, NGOs, product teams, UNDP digital advocates, GIZ digital ambassadors, GovStack consortium, Government officials of Sierra Leone, DPG product teams and system integrators/vendors.

2.1.3 Survey

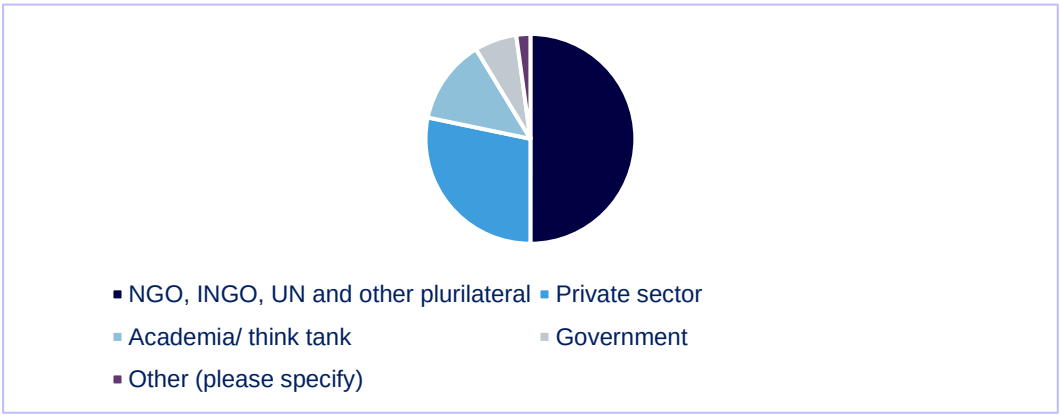
DIAL distributed a feedback survey to approximately 200 confirmed registered users of the Catalog of Digital Solutions. In addition, DIAL's Catalog team further disseminated the survey via social media and reached out to various participants of the Marketplace research focus groups to complete the survey and disseminate it within their network. In total, the survey was distributed to 272 individuals.

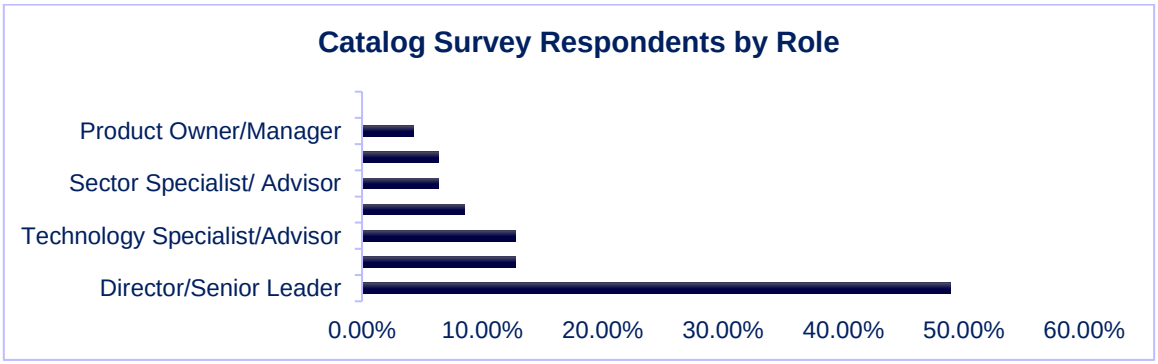
DIAL provided a window of 3 weeks and 5 days to complete the survey, with weekly reminders sent to respondents to complete the survey. In total, DIAL distributed the survey to about 272 individuals, of which 47 individuals represent a response rate of about 17.2 %.

The table below list the demographics of the individuals that completed the survey. It is interesting to note that survey respondents all held a director/senior management role at their organization. As depicted in the survey respondent pie chart and table below, system integrators did not participate in the survey. However, DIAL then made it a priority for system integrators to participate in a focus group session and join DIAL's Marketplace reference group. Thus, the research team was able to capture the procurment pain-points of this group as well as the types of features and functionality the Marketplace platform should prioritize. The full report with the analysis of the survey results has been uploaded onto DIAL's confluence page.

Demographics of survey respondents

Organization	Role	Sector	Region	User Personas
• NGOs, INGO and UN, and other plurilateral organizations • Governement entity • Private sector • Academia/think-tank	• Director/Senior Management	• Digital, Data, and Technology/ICT Development. • Education and social development • Health, and nutrition • Sector agnostic - general SDG related sectors	• Europe • Sub-Saharan Africa	• Implementing partner • Development actors • Product owners • System integrators/service providers





2.2 Validation of Findings

The research team made it a priority to validate all data synthesized and analyzed as part of the research process. This was done in two phases:

- **Internal validation**: The team organized a series of feedback consultation on the Marketplace learning agenda and research methodology between the research team and DIAL. Moreover, a bi-weekly meeting sync was set up with internal DPG and procurment experts within DIAL – to discuss ongoing research findings. The research team used feedback from DIAL to help refine and finalize its learning agenda and research approach.
- **Reference group:** A reference group was set up with key experts in the DPGs sphere. A total of 24 individuals are members of this reference group and these members include DIAL staff with DPG expertise, digital procurement experts, donor organizations, technology providers, service providers, and other key stakeholders. The research team set up this reference group for these key experts to vet and review the research data that DIAL collated through the survey, individual meetings, and focus group sessions. Moreover, the reference group members have agreed to jointly collaborate with the research team to outline the Marketplace roadmap and the key features and functionalities to incorporate.

2.3 Limitations

The research team encountered the following design and implementation limitations during the study:

- Challenges in securing **government** participation: Government contacts were largely unresponsive to requests for the individual meetings and completion of the survey.
- **Geographic focus**: Respondents in the survey were largely concentrated in North America and Sub-Saharan Africa. While the research team and DIAL attempted to engage key informants beyond these two regions, stakeholders outside of these regions were generally unresponsive.
- Low number of **product owners/team** key informants: The research team was unable to consult a substantial number of product owners/teams as aspired. Only 9 product owners/teams participated in the focus group session. However, the individuals that participated were quite internationally spread with a clear understanding of the ecosystem needs for supply side actors.
- Low number of **survey responses**. The primary challenge was a limited click-through rate, indicating that the survey was not attracting the attention necessary to bring respondents to the survey landing page. One explanation is ‘survey fatigue.’ Another explanation, noted earlier, could be that many stakeholders did not understand the terminology ‘Marketplace platform’ and therefore did not show interest in or ownership of the survey’s subject matter.

Despite these limitations, the individual meetings, focus group sessions and survey generated rich and complementary data that has been found useful by the reference group members and DIAL’s research team to decide which Marketplace features to prioritize.

3 Key Findings and Analysis

3.1 Gaps and Needs Assessment

3.1.1 Synthesis of Feedback Received

As outlined in section 2, a series of individual consultation meetings, focus group sessions and a survey were used to acquire feedback and input from a diverse range of stakeholders in the digital ecosystem.

In total, the research team engaged with 160 individuals, across 57 organizations through 23 individual meetings, 8 focus group sessions and 1 survey dissemination. The general themes that emerged validated a need for a platform to connect demand and supply side actors in the DPG space that eases the initial procurement process of digital solutions and tools.

Common needs raised by **supply side actors** included access to **funding** and **request for proposal (RFP) opportunities** to generate revenue and remain sustainable, and tutorials to provide guidance on interoperability and the building blocks framework. On the **demand side**, these stakeholders mentioned need for guidance to **discover** vendors and system integrators with quality experience in deploying and implementing digital services. Other key challenges demand side actors generally highlighted included **addressing vendor lock-in**, and the usability and sustainability of digital products they procure.

Below is the synthesis of the reoccurring key themes raised by both supply and demand side actors, which has been categorized into the following five aspects:

- **RFP/tender structure and procurment processes**. **Supply side actors** generally felt that the technical framing of tenders and RFPs are often unclear and do not provide enough technical information/ terminology required for software developers and teams. There also tends to be a lack of transparency in the procurement process, with limited opportunity for meaningful engagement to pose questions and acquire additional clarification on the tenders. Whereas **demand side actors** key challenge in this topic, is obtaining enough vendor applicants for the tenders that they publish. It tends to be the same few vendors that apply for their RFP opportunities.
- **Discoverability and promotion of service providers with digital deployment experience in the development space** were common themes mentioned by both demand and supply side actors. **Supply side actors** generally felt that beyond their respective website, external promotion opportunities to market their services and showcase references of past deployed solutions were scarce in the DPG ecosystem. Moreover, **demand side actors** were keen for a single platform where they could easily find digital service providers (both local and international) with experience implementing and deploying digital solutions in LMICs. In addition, demand side actors wanted to be able to discover quality level digital service providers with open-source experience and services that would not lead to a vendor lock-in situation.
- **Tools to compare similar DPGs as well as proprietary solutions/commercial off the shelf (COTS) technology**. **Demand side actors** highlighted the need to be able to compare DPGs and COTS products side-by-side – across multiple data points and pick the best for their needs. Recommended product parameters mentioned were software code, licenses, copyright, pricing cost/model, software quality, evaluation rubric scoring, date of last update, number of deployments and locations of deployments.

- **Transparency and discrepancies in pricing information/budget** to deploy and implement digital solutions was a very common topic of concern for both demand and supply side actors. Suggestions were made for the Marketplace to provide pricing guidelines for cost required to procure specific digital services in the DPG space as well as provide pricing information for subscription to different DPG and commercial tools listed in the Marketplace.
- **Finally, requests were made to incorporate a community scoring/rating system** of products and services listed in the Marketplace to support in narrowing down the selection by demand side actors and vet the products and services of supply side actors. The suggestion made was to provide Marketplace demand side users with the ability to leave stars or reviews for entries in the Marketplace (including stars for use cases, products, etc.).

Below are summaries of the feedback received from specific stakeholder groups in the focus group sessions organized by the research team.

3.1.2 GIZ Digital Ambassadors in Kenya, Rwanda, and Egypt

Challenges and frustrations in procuring digital tools and working with vendors on digital implementation:

- Limited visibility and even availability of local vendors with the expertise in implementing digital solutions.
- Lack of availability of vendor review based on their previous experiences.
- Lack of knowledge of agile methods which ensure efficiency and quality of digital products.
- Limited local capacity building for governments in the use of emerging technologies for the public sector.

Goals when procuring digital tools or working with vendors to implement a digital solution:

- Having open standards.
- High quality, efficiency, ease of use and sustainability of digital solutions.
- Ensure there is no vendor lock-in and that use of solution does not dependent on internal technical capacity.
- Interoperability and standardization of digital solutions.
- Smooth implementation and delivery process through agile implementation methods.

3.1.3 Incubators/Accelerators

Challenges and frustrations when helping tech companies to grow, scale, and remain sustainable:

- Being able to address data protection and privacy issues.
- Lack of clear regulatory guidelines in the digital space especially in low-and middle-income countries.
- Little understanding and training on the value proposition of building solutions using an open-source platform.
- Internet Infrastructural barriers in the rural areas.
- Lack of skilled workforce/market knowledge for early-stage startups.
- Limited funding opportunities for startups in the ideation stage.

Goals when working with digital/tech companies:

- Promoting the use of open source as a tool to curb cost of developing a product from scratch.
- Organizing incubation and acceleration programs that ensures startups grow in a sustainable manner through provision of the following startup support services:
    - Providing market research support to ensure startups design an innovative market fit product;
    - Facilitating capacity building and cultural alignment within their teams;
    - Linking the startups with distribution (channel) partners and investors;
    - Facilitating software access to startups at an affordable cost;
    - Providing a working space and mentors to support startups to build their software products.

3.1.4 GovStack Members

Obstacles that could hinder the process of transforming DIAL's Catalog into a Marketplace platform:

- Limited digital solutions on the shelves.
- Procurement processes are unique to each government and sometimes decentralized even within a country.
- The research team has yet to establish institutional partners that could be instrumental in ensuring the success of the Marketplace i.e., the European Commission, World Bank, the United Nations (UN) – especially the UN's global marketplace.

Recommendations on specific features and functionality to prioritize in the Marketplace:

- Clarifying user personas and problem statement per product on the Catalog/Marketplace.
- Display other services besides software products (e.g., operations, advisory, hosting, audits).
- Having a sandbox where users can build a workflow using their own + GovStack components. This sandboxing support would also be a significant help for DPG (Digital Public Goods) developers working on interoperability scenarios.
- Focusing on the main objective, e.g., matching products to use cases/specs.
- Providing free feature development until the research team can identify the highest value and most tractable problem that a new feature can solve.
- Having a Go-To Marketplace user guideline/FAQ section responding to a series of questions such as: How a digital service would be managed? What the onboarding process is like? By whom? With which tools? Which certified system integrators would be the best fit?

3.1.5 Leave No One Behind - Supporting Inclusivity in Digital Tech

Challenges and frustrations faced by product teams:

- Stability, sustainability, data privacy and security issues.
- Showcasing the value proposition to potential clients interested in procuring digital products when one has limited use cases.
- Challenge of ensuring that one's product is 'user-friendly and usable/configurable by non-tech proficient users.
- Buy-in from internal stakeholders to a) pay for the tool and b) learn a new tool.
- Keeping up with the times to make sure digital tools can meet changing needs of users.
- Staying up to date with the legal/regulatory laws around data protection regulations compliance.
- Finding ways to ensure one's digital tools are interoperable with others.

Strategies needed to strengthen capacity building of women and underrepresented groups in the DPG ecosystem:

- More fiscal sponsors that focus on underrepresented groups.
- Support community building of women product owners and team members without the pressure to output/build/meet goals that are externally set by providing visibility, funding, outreach, and trainings.
    - Incentives to help product owners build upon their business models.
- Targeted outreach to rural marginalized communities about digital tools available and their usefulness.

Recommendations on specific features and functionality to prioritize in the Marketplace:

- Clear pricing information and guidelines on cost of deploying and implementing a specific digital tool/solution.
- A playbook/guideline for product teams to help them meet certain maturity standards as well as provide them with feedback on areas to improve.
- Have a maturity rubric in place.
- Ratings and feedback.
- More detailed use cases with guidelines on how to apply them in diverse context.
- A function that lists relevant funding opportunities and events.

3.1.6 Government of Sierra Leone

The research team presented the Catalog to the government officials and the concept behind the Marketplace platform. General feedback and interest areas stated by government participants were the following:

- Translation of the Catalog and Marketplace into local languages to ensure usage.
- Having a list of use cases specific to the needs of Sierra Leone based on their National Development Priority strategy document 2019-2023.

3.1.7 Product Owners/Teams

Challenges and frustrations in the procurement process of digital solution:

- Terminology used in tenders and RFPs tend to be unclear in indicating specific technology needs, and limited opportunity for meaningful engagement with organizations publishing tenders leaves clarification needs unanswered.
    - Technical framing is often poorly thought through.
- Lengthy process (12+ month) between proof-of-concept, approval and final procurement in the public sector makes it a deterrence to apply for their RFP opportunities. So does lengthy delays in receiving payment from the government.

Recommendations on specific features and functionality to prioritize in the Marketplace:

- A helpdesk service for buyers that focuses on working with specific organizations to better understand the use cases.
- Filter by region - an automated way to match buyers in a specific region with sellers in that region or country.
- A product "dump site" where people can submit their product if it is missing on the catalog and Marketplace platform.

- "Quick feedback" box.
- Section for supply side actors to list references/users.
- On the Marketplace landing page, there could perhaps be a simple survey approach to guide first time users on how to navigate the platform and be directed based on their need – with multiple-choice options e.g., What are you looking for today? (Alternatives: products / tools / digital service provider/ projects etc.).
- Appropriate weighting of rating as well as the validating ratings.
- Ensuring information is dynamic, accurate and up to date.
- Raise awareness of local product teams with LMIC governments.

3.1.8 System Integrators (SIs) and Vendors

Challenges raised:

- Deploying open-source software - it is difficult to find how to find demand side actors willing to finance these projects. DIAL's Catalog should support people who are building/maintaining/integrating software. Support them to be self-sustaining.
- Important to address how the Marketplace is going to support transactions in the procurement process. Transaction process in the procurement of digital services is a difficult and ongoing challenge. SIs feel like the marketplace is not solving this problem.

Recommendations:

- DIAL should consult independent consultants working in this space – as these consultants have more on the ground experience in implementing/deploying digital tools and services.
    - Independent consultants tend to be hired to deploy digital services
- The SIs are very interested in learning more about the donor angle – what their interest are in this space? What types of funding opportunities/ tenders do donors plan to launch and host on DIAL's Marketplace?
- They liked the storefront concept for service providers as a Marketplace feature.
    - Recommendation is to simplify the process to register and complete the storefront profile.
- The SIs are open to being charged a small subscription amount in order to have their profile on the marketplace platform and to be able to apply for RFP opportunities.
    - This would help in verifying profiles and vetting the service providers with a storefront profile on the Marketplace platform
- Recommended DIAL has a look at clutch for an example of a rating and reviews system being done well. Also, Salesforce is a Marketplace that works well.
- Recommended DIAL look into how to tie in universities as there are more universities developing digital solutions.

A short survey was disseminated during the focus group via sli.do, below are the consolidated responses:

- Countries/regions the SI focus group participants have worked in: Middle East, Poland, Africa - across 40 countries, and Southeast Asia.
- Countries/regions SI participants would like to expand to: across Africa, the UK, USA, the Middle East, India, the EU, Belgium, and Asia.
- The research team asked the participants what would compel them to use the Marketplace platform: in general, they would be compelled to use the platform if it is used as a marketing channel and if it is able to provide more opportunities for them.

- Participants were asked if they would be willing to post specific prices they would charge for deployment/implementation of digital service: all participants said they were willing to provide DIAL with pricing information such as explaining how a pilot project would work and detailing the associated cost as well as an optional budgetary costs for first engagement to qualify the prospect which includes: analysis, development, support, and deployment.
    - In addition, participants suggested that pricing information should be customized according to needs. The pricing of SaaS and POC can be easily deployed, however, for other projects, pricing might be a bit challenging depending on the different needs.

3.2 Marketplace Features

As outlined in section 3.1, the research team received extensive input on the challenges facing demand and supply side actors. Moreover, consultations with procurement experts working with governments and international organizations led the research team to understand that DIAL's Marketplace cannot facilitate the entire procurement cycle. This is due to the fact that most countries and development actors have different regulatory systems, tendering processes and mandates when it comes to procuring digital technology.

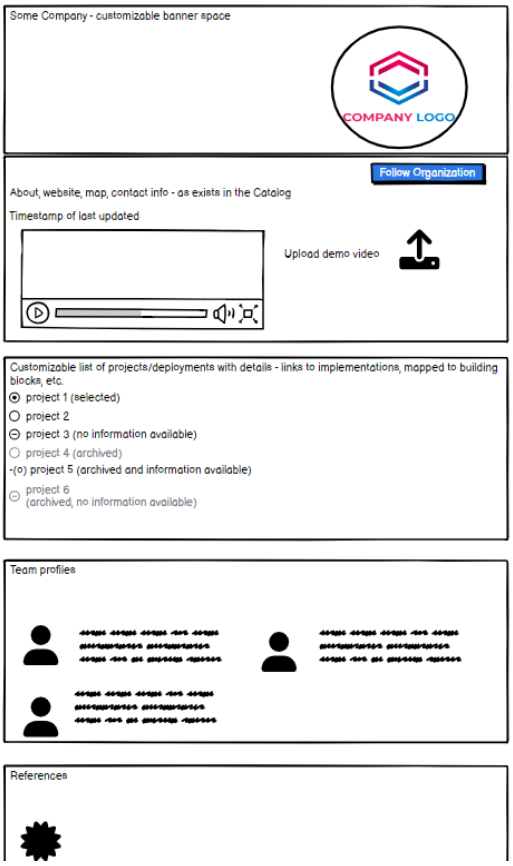
Nevertheless, following further analysis of the specific procurement pain-points raised in section 3.1 and the desk research/landscape analysis of existing marketplaces (see Appendix 5.1.4), the research team concluded that DIAL's Marketplace is still necessary and can play a crucial role in the digital ecosystem. Specifically, around: (i) supporting wider dissemination of **RFP and tender opportunities**, (ii) a dedicated platform where supply side actors can **market the digital solutions** they can provide, and (iii) helping demand side actors to be able to **compare multiple products** – DPGs and proprietary tools in the Marketplace platform.

The sub-sections below list the three features the research team recommends the Marketplace prioritize to address ongoing procurement pain-points in the digital development ecosystem. The wireframes of the Marketplace features have been drafted by the research team and are embedded below.

3.2.1 Vendor Storefront

This feature was selected because demand side actors requested **the need** for a single platform where they could easily find digital service providers (both local and international) with experience implementing and deploying digital solutions in LMICs. This also meets the need of supply side actors, who requested a supply-side feature allowing vendors, DPG product owners, and system integrators to advertise themselves via customizable pages in the Marketplace.

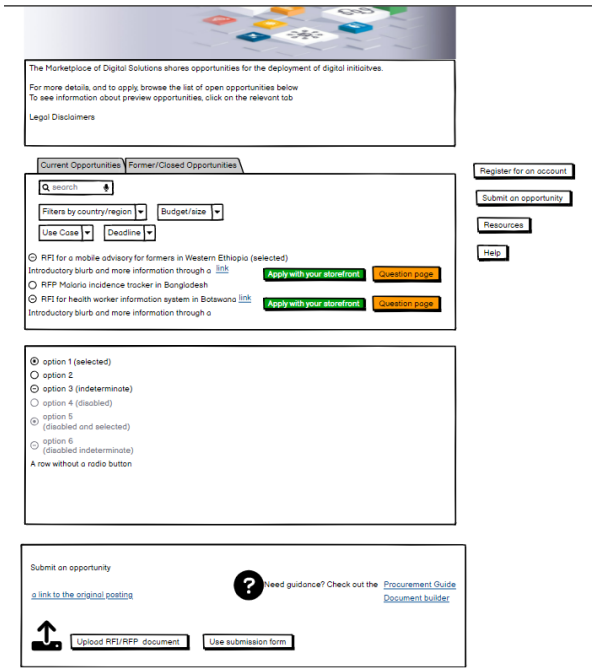
Below is the draft wireframe for the Storefront – a profile template that supply side actors (technology providers, system integrators, vendors etc.) should complete to create a customizable "storefront" profile to showcase and market the technology/services they can provide, company team composition, and list references of digital initiatives they have worked on. This will also support demand side actors to filter through digital service providers based on their needs.



3.2.2 RFP Radar

This feature was selected to promote transparency and competition in the bidding process of request for proposals (RFPs) in the international development digital ecosystem. Moreover, address a key challenge expressed by demand side actors – obtaining enough vendor applicants for the tenders that they publish as it tends to be the same few vendors that apply for their RFP opportunities. Finally, supply side actors also requested a feature that supported local and smaller vendors to be able to identify potential bidding opportunities.

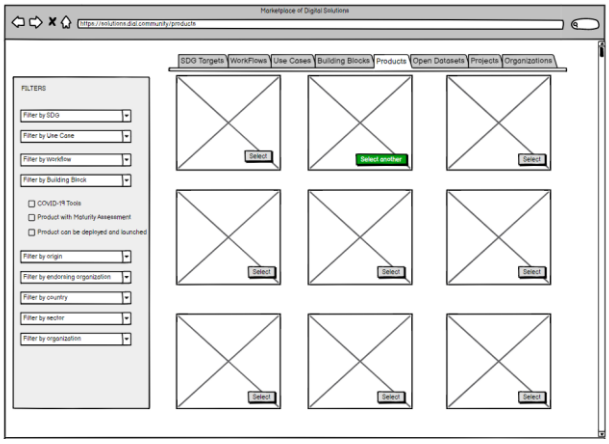
Below is the draft wireframe of the RFP radar - demand side users (governments, donors, international development organizations, NGOs, UN agencies etc.) can upload RFP/ tender opportunities. This will increase their pool of applications, promote transparency in the procurment process and give local and smaller vendors the opportunity to apply for these opportunities.



3.2.3 Comparison Tool

Finally, the result of this feature is due to feedback received on the need for a tool to be able to compare products – both digital public goods and commercial tools, across multiple data points. As a result we are proposing this feature to support users to be able to discover and select multiple software solutions and conduct a side-by-side comparison of the tools, including information on GovStack Building Block compliance/coverage, licensing, product maturity, sectors, and deployments.

Below is the draft wireframe for the Comparison tool - a tool that allows users to view products side-by-side, compare them across multiple data points, and pick the best for their needs. Products that can be compared will included both open source and proprietary solutions.



4 Conclusions & Next Steps

This report will continue to be a live document that will be updated following the conclusion of Phase 2 of the research project.

4.1 UX Design Work

As a next step, the research team plans to start developing the Marketplace features in more detail by creating mockups that can be tested by the reference group members. This will ensure quality user feedback on these features.

A scope of work (SOW) seeking UX design services for the Marketplace features has been created and disseminated to vendors. The objective is to secure a vendor by October 2022 to do the following: transform the current Catalog into a more interactive and user-friendly platform with a new marketplace landing page, and a refreshed structure that incorporates the Marketplace features: (i) vendor storefronts, (ii) RFP radar, and (iii) comparison product tool. The SOW highlighted the importance of ensuring the UX changes made to the Catalog are done in conjunction and close collaboration with DIAL's/ the Catalog's overall brand redesign.

4.2 Reference Group

The research team organized the reference group kickoff meeting on August 19th, 2022. The objective of this meeting was to hear from the 24 reference group members representing key supply and demand side actors – on whether the Marketplace design thinking to-date and planned features (RFP Radar, Vendor Storefront, and Comparison Tool) addresses general pain-points in the digital ecosystem.

The feedback received from the members has been very significant in guiding the research team. The reference group members raised questions arounds gaps (defined in section 4.3) they believe are still missing in the research work thus far. The research team plans to address these gaps. Accordingly, two additional meeting are scheduled to take place with the reference group members – the second in October and the third in December 2022. The objective of these meetings will be to present the research gap findings and acquire tangible feed on the updated Marketplace wireframes and mockups developed by the vendor UX design team.

4.3 Ways to Bridge the Remaining Research Gaps

Two crucial research gaps were raised by the reference group members during the kickoff meeting. The first gap is analyzing the existing procurement platforms of large donor institutions and consulting their procurement team in charge of publishing RFPs for digital technologies.

The priority for the month of October 2022, is to consult procurement teams at large donor agencies such as GIZ, USAID, United Nations General Marketplace (UNGM), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). These consultations will focus on understanding how the Marketplace can support donor agencies to easily identify and acquire a larger pool of vendor applicants to implement and deploy the digital solutions they wish to procure.

The second gap is the government angle. The reference members emphasized the importance of addressing the research gap on direct consultations with LMIC governments. Their advice is to organize consultations with at least ICT Ministers in low- and middle-income countries to acquire feedback on what they would require to publish RFP opportunities on the Marketplace platform. The

research team plans to pursue additional reach outs to government officials to schedule these consultations.

4.4 Incentives, Engagement and Marketing Channels

An additional next step highly prioritized by the research team, is to start outlining a detailed incentive and marketing strategy on how to compel actors to use the Marketplace platform. The incentive strategy will be developed in close collaboration with the reference group members. These members will be asked to provide input and use case examples of incentives that would ensure supply and demand side actors use the platform.

Regarding the marketing strategy, below is a list of marketing activities the research team has in mind:

- Use of DIAL and GovStack's social media platforms to actively promote the Marketplace landing page and new features.
- Secure at least two donors to publish relevant RFP opportunities on the Marketplace RFP opportunity radar.
- Launch an "Open Call" for SIs and Vendors to register on the Marketplace storefront.
- Request reference group members to promote the Marketplace in their network.
- Community building: organize bi-monthly webinars where DIAL brings together different actors in the ecosystem to exchange with each other - best practices, digital solution needs, challenges etc.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

Ensuring that this Marketplace is designed in a very user centric manner is important for the research team. Thus, this document will be uploaded on confluence whereby readers can share feedback and input on the research synthesis presented in this document.

5 Appendix

5.1.1 Learning agenda

5.1.2 Research methodology

5.1.3 Landscape analysis

5.1.4 Table 1: List of Organizations Consulted

Below is the list of organizations consulted through individual meetings, focus group session and the Marketplace reference group. This list does not include the name of organizations that completed the Marketplace survey.

Organization	Location/Presence	Areas of Expertise and Discussion Focal Points
Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL)	Global Presence/Scope	Procurement, GovStack, DPG capacity building and country engagement
World Health Organization (WHO)	Global Presence/Scope	Procurement, country engagement and donor/digital funder
GIZ HQ Staff	Germany	Donor/digital funder, GovStack and country engagement perspective
Open Function	Global Scope	GovStack and digital service and technology provider
International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Digital Development Bureau	Global Presence/Scope	Procurement, donor/digital funder, GovStack, country engagement
Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA)	Global Presence/Scope	DPG capacity building needs
African Development Bank (AfDB), ICT and Digital Education Unit	Africa	Donor/digital funder and country engagement
World Bank	Global Presence/Scope	Donor/digital funder and country engagement
World Food Programme (WFP)	Global Presence/Scope	Donor/digital funder and country engagement
Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)	Africa and Asia	Country engagement
CURSHAW – Procurement and Supply of Digital Company	Global Presence/Scope	Procurement, UK's Digital Marketplace, and digital service provider
International Monetary Fund (IMF) - GovTech	Global Presence/Scope	Donor/digital funder, country engagement around GovTech
GovStack	Global Presence/Scope	Country engagement and public sector software
Ona	Global Presence/Scope	Digital service provider
GIZ Digital Ambassador - Kenya	Kenya	GovStack and country engagement
GIZ Digital Ambassador - Egypt	Egypt	GovStack and country engagement
GIZ Digital Ambassador - Rwanda	Rwanda	GovStack and country engagement
CiviCRM Foundation	Global Presence/Scope	Donor/digital funder
Digital Transformation Center ITU Africa Team	Africa	Country engagement
United Nations Office for Project Services, UN Web Plus	Global Presence/Scope	Country engagement, digital marketplace for the public sector

Organization	Location/Presence	Areas of Expertise and Discussion Focal Points
Republic of Estonia, Government Chief Technology Officer	Estonia	Technical and public sector software
Sierra Leone Government Technical Working Group mandated to develop Sierra Leone's Enterprise Architecture Framework	Sierra Leone	Public sector technology, country engagement and procurment needs
Digital Square at PATH	Global organization with mission to advance health equity through innovation and partnerships	Country engagement, digital solutions expertise in the health sector
Co-Creation Hub	Nigeria, Rwanda, and Kenya	Role of incubators and accelerators in the DPG space, capacity building needs of technologists
Crescent Innovation and Incubation Council	India	Role of incubators and accelerators in the DPG space, capacity building needs of technologists
Sensi Tech Hub	Sierra Leone	Role of incubators and accelerators in the DPG space, capacity building needs of technologists
Jokkolabs Global	West and Central Africa	Role of incubators and accelerators in the DPG space, capacity building needs of technologists
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Chief Digital Office	Global Presence/Scope	Information on UNDP's general coordination and digital transformation efforts across their country offices
UNDP Digital Advocate - Libya	Libya	Country engagement and digital needs assessment of governments
UNDP Digital Advocate - India	India	Country engagement and digital needs assessment of governments
UNDP Digital Advocate – Democratic Republic of Congo	Democratic Republic of Congo	Country engagement and digital needs assessment of governments
UNDP Digital Advocate - Liberia	Liberia	Country engagement and digital needs assessment of governments
UNDP Digital Advocate - Tunisia	Tunisia	Country engagement and digital needs assessment of governments
UNDP Digital Advocate - Comoros	Comoros	Country engagement and digital needs assessment of governments
ThoughtWorks	Global Technology Consultancy	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
SolDevelo	Global Technology Consultancy	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Newlogic	Digital consultancy headquartered in Singapore with offices throughout Southeast Asia	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors

Organization	Location/Presence	Areas of Expertise and Discussion Focal Points
OpusVI	Global open-source solution provider	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
ProteanTecs	Global solutions provider	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Kwantu Platform	South Africa	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
The Catalyst Fund Inclusive Digital Commerce Accelerator program	Ghana	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Relief Applications	Global technology provider for humanitarian organizations	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
The Tor Project	Global open-source solution provider	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Ushahidi Platform	Global non-profit technology company	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
OpenG2P	Global initiative digitizing large scale cash transfers with open-source building blocks	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Mifos and Fineract Initiative	Global API-driven open-source platform for financial inclusion	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Tasking Manager	Global free and open-source software for mapping	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Meta	Pan-African technology provider addressing ICT infrastructure and internet broadband needs	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Girls Learn International (GLI)	Global NGO addressing gender inequality and girls' education	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Sorolingo	Pan-African digital language learning platform	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Arrai Innovations	Global software solution provider	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors
Simply Secure	Global software development and product management company	Ecosystem needs of technologists, system integrators, and/or vendors