Digital Commons Framework: Impact Assessment Template

Estimated Reading Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: This template provides a structured framework for assessing the impact of Digital Commons Framework implementations at the Local Citizen Node, Regional Hub, or Global Council levels. Drawing on the methodology outlined in Appendix K: Impact Assessment Framework, it offers practical tools to measure social, cultural, governance, and environmental outcomes of digital commons initiatives. Designed for diverse contexts and varying resource levels, it supports evidence-based adaptation and continuous improvement while ensuring accountability to communities and alignment with Core Principles.

Overview

Impact assessment is fundamental to the Digital Commons Framework's commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, and community benefit. This template helps you systematically evaluate how your implementation affects various dimensions of community life, digital equity, and resource governance.

Why conduct impact assessments?

- **Accountability**: Demonstrate how digital commons activities affect communities
- **Improvement**: Identify strengths and areas needing enhancement
- **Learning**: Generate insights to share across the framework
- **Adaptation**: Ensure alignment with evolving community needs
- **Evidence**: Build a case for continued support and expansion

When to use this template:

- **Baseline Assessment**: At the start of implementation (recommended within first 3 months)
- **Regular Evaluation**: Annually at minimum
- **Major Milestones**: After significant changes or expansion

- **Funding Reports**: When reporting to supporters or applying for resources

- **Crisis Recovery**: Following disruptions to measure resilience

This template supports multiple assessment approaches based on your resources and context:

- **Path A (Minimal)**: Community dialogue-based assessment with simple documentation

- **Path B (Basic)**: Mixed methods using surveys and basic data collection

- **Path C (Standard)**: Comprehensive mixed methods with quantitative and qualitative data

- **Path D (Advanced)**: Sophisticated measurement with longitudinal tracking and advanced analytics

Section 1: Assessment Planning

1.1 Assessment Team

Team Composition: *[List names and roles of those conducting the assessment]*

Name	Role in Node	Role in Assessment	Perspectives Represented

Team Balance Assessment:

- Gender diversity: *[Balanced/Needs improvement]*

- Age representation: *[Balanced/Needs improvement]*

- Technical/non-technical balance: *[Balanced/Needs improvement]*

- Marginalized group inclusion: *[Adequate/Needs improvement]*

1.2 Assessment Scope

Node Information:

- Node Name: _____

- Node ID: _____

- Location: _____

- Date Established: _____

- Current Membership: _____

- Previous Assessments: _____

Assessment Timeframe:

- Period being assessed: _____ to _____

- Assessment conducted: _____ to _____

Implementation Path:

- ☐ Path A (Minimal)

- ☐ Path B (Basic)

- ☐ Path C (Standard)

- ☐ Path D (Advanced)

Components Being Assessed:

- ☐ Open Data Commons

- ☐ Open-Source Software Ecosystem

- ☐ Shared Digital Infrastructure

- ☐ Ethical AI Models

- ☐ Knowledge Commons

1.3 Methodology Planning

Data Collection Methods:

- ☐ Community meetings/dialogues

- ☐ Surveys (paper/digital/SMS)

- ☐ Individual interviews

- ☐ Focus groups

- ☐ Direct observation

- ☐ Digital platform analytics

- ☐ Document review

Stakeholder Inclusion: *[Describe how diverse perspectives will be captured, especially from marginalized groups]*

Resources Required:

- Time commitment: _____ person-hours

- Materials: _____

- Technology: _____

- External support: _____

Adaptation Notes: *[Note any adaptations to standard methodology based on local context]*

Section 2: Social Impact Assessment

2.1 Digital Access Equity

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected access to digital resources across different community groups?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
% of community with meaningful digital access				90% by 2035
Access gap between highest/lowest income groups				
Gender access ratio (women:men)				1:1 by 2035
% of disabled community members with adapted access				
% of elderly population with meaningful access				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has access changed for traditionally marginalized groups?

_____

_____

2. What barriers to access remain, and for whom?

_____

_____

3. How do community members describe changes in their digital access?

_____

_____

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Survey data
- ☐ Usage logs
- ☐ Testimonials
- ☐ Direct observation
- ☐ Other: _____

2.2 Community Cohesion

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected relationships and trust within the community?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
Community trust index (1-5 scale)				70% reporting improved cohesion by 2030
% of community reporting strengthened relationships				

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
Cross-group collaboration instances				
Conflict incidents and resolution rate				
% reporting sense of shared ownership				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has the digital commons affected existing social structures?

2. What new relationships or collaborations have formed?

3. How are conflicts or tensions addressed differently?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Social network analysis
- ☐ Community dialogue notes
- ☐ Conflict resolution records
- ☐ Testimonials
- ☐ Other: _____

2.3 Knowledge Democratization

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected the distribution of knowledge and skills in the community?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
% of community with basic digital literacy				60% confident in participation by 2032
% participating in knowledge creation				
# of local knowledge contributions				
Digital skill distribution (Gini coefficient)				
% reporting increased access to educational resources				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has knowledge sharing changed within the community?

2. Which groups have experienced the greatest knowledge gains?

3. What types of knowledge are being preserved or created?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Skills assessments
- ☐ Knowledge repository analytics
- ☐ Participation records
- ☐ Self-efficacy surveys

- ☐ Other: _____

2.4 Social Impact Summary

Key Findings:

_____

_____

_____

Areas of Strength:

_____

_____

Areas for Improvement:

_____

_____

Priority Actions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Section 3: Cultural Impact Assessment

3.1 Cultural Preservation

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
# of cultural artifacts preserved				500+ artifacts per node by 2035
% of local languages supported				
Intergenerational transmission metrics				50% increase in youth engagement by 2035
# of cultural protocols implemented				
Community usage of cultural archives				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has cultural knowledge preservation changed?

2. How do cultural authorities view digital preservation efforts?

3. What cultural elements have been prioritized or neglected?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Digital archive metrics
- ☐ Cultural practitioner interviews
- ☐ Community usage statistics
- ☐ Elder assessments

- ☐ Other: _____

3.2 Cultural Autonomy

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected the community's control over its cultural representation?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
% of cultural decisions made locally				
# of external uses respecting protocols				
Protocol violation incidents				
% reporting satisfaction with cultural governance				80% satisfaction by 2032
# of cultural adaptation instances				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has control over cultural knowledge changed?

_____

_____

2. What processes ensure cultural protocols are respected?

_____

_____

3. How are disagreements about cultural representation resolved?

_____

_____

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Protocol audit documents

- ☐ Governance records

- ☐ Satisfaction surveys

- ☐ Elder interviews

- ☐ Other: _____

3.3 Linguistic Diversity

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected language use and preservation?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
# of languages actively used in node				100 languages in Knowledge Commons by 2035
% of materials available in local languages				
# of language preservation activities				
Youth fluency in traditional languages				
# of language documentation initiatives				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has digital commons affected language use patterns?

2. What language preservation efforts have been most effective?

3. What language-related challenges remain?

_____

_____

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Language availability audits
- ☐ Usage analytics
- ☐ Speaker surveys
- ☐ Linguist assessments
- ☐ Other: _____

3.4 Cultural Impact Summary

Key Findings:

_____

_____

_____

Areas of Strength:

_____

_____

Areas for Improvement:

_____

_____

Priority Actions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Section 4: Governance Impact Assessment

4.1 Participation Quality

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected the depth and breadth of community engagement in governance?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
% of adult community members participating				50% by 2035
Demographic representation in governance				
Average participation frequency per member				
Proposal submission distribution				
Decision influence equity measure				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has the nature of participation changed?

2. Which groups have increased or decreased participation?

3. How do community members describe their governance experience?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Participation logs
- ☐ Decision influence tracking
- ☐ Demographic analysis
- ☐ Member interviews
- ☐ Other: _____

4.2 Process Transparency

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected the visibility and understandability of decision-making?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
% of decisions fully documented				90% by 2030
% of community aware of decision processes				
Documentation accessibility score				
# of public audit/review events				
% of proceedings available in accessible formats				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has transparency changed compared to previous governance?

2. What aspects of governance remain unclear to community members?

3. How accessible is governance information to different groups?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Documentation audits
- ☐ Access metrics
- ☐ Comprehension surveys
- ☐ Accessibility assessment
- ☐ Other: _____

4.3 Power Distribution

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected how decision-making authority is shared?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
Decision concentration index				75% reporting equitable distribution by 2032
Leadership diversity metrics				
Proposal success rate by demographic				
Resource allocation equity				
% reporting equitable influence				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has power distribution shifted since implementation?

2. What informal power dynamics affect governance?

1.

3. How are differences in technical capacity addressed?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Network analysis of decision flows
- ☐ Influence mapping
- ☐ Perception surveys
- ☐ Resource allocation analysis
- ☐ Other: _____

4.4 Governance Impact Summary

Key Findings:

Areas of Strength:

Areas for Improvement:

Priority Actions:

1.

2.

3.

Section 5: Environmental Impact Assessment

5.1 Infrastructure Sustainability

Key Question: How does the Digital Commons implementation affect environmental resources?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
% of infrastructure using renewable energy				80% by 2035
Carbon footprint (CO2e)				
E-waste generation and recycling rate				
Power consumption per user				
Environmental impact offset activities				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How does the community perceive environmental impacts?

2. What sustainability initiatives have been implemented?

3. What environmental challenges remain?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Energy consumption records
- ☐ Carbon calculations
- ☐ Hardware lifecycle tracking
- ☐ Environmental audit
- ☐ Other: _____

5.2 Environmental Data Utilization

Key Question: How is environmental data being used within the Digital Commons?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
# of environmental datasets managed				
# of environmental applications				
User engagement with environmental data				
Environmental outcomes influenced				
# of environmental projects launched				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How is environmental data informing local decisions?

2. What environmental benefits have resulted?

3. What opportunities for environmental impact exist?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Data repository analytics
- ☐ Project documentation
- ☐ Environmental outcome measures
- ☐ Stakeholder interviews
- ☐ Other: _____

5.3 Environmental Impact Summary

Key Findings:

Areas of Strength:

Areas for Improvement:

Priority Actions:

1.

2.

3.

Section 6: Economic Impact Assessment

6.1 Value Creation and Distribution

Key Question: How has the Digital Commons Framework affected economic opportunities and resource distribution?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
Economic value generated (estimated)				40% reporting increased opportunities by 2035
% of value returned to community				
# of new economic opportunities created				
Income changes attributed to digital commons				
Resource distribution equity index				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. What new livelihoods or income sources have emerged?

2. How equitably are economic benefits distributed?

3. What economic barriers or challenges remain?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Household surveys
- ☐ Income tracking
- ☐ Business formation rates
- ☐ Data dividend records
- ☐ Other: _____

6.2 Resource Mobilization

Key Question: How effectively has the Digital Commons Framework mobilized resources for community benefit?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
Total resources mobilized				
Funding diversity (sources)				50% from non-corporate sources by 2035
Resource sustainability index				
% of resource needs met				90% of budgets met by 2030
Resource allocation efficiency				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How has resource acquisition changed over time?

2. What resource gaps remain most significant?

3. How is resource allocation decided and documented?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Budget records
- ☐ Funding applications
- ☐ Allocation minutes
- ☐ Stakeholder interviews
- ☐ Other: _____

6.3 Economic Impact Summary

Key Findings:

Areas of Strength:

Areas for Improvement:

Priority Actions:

1.

2.

3.

Section 7: Cross-Commons Synergies

7.1 Environmental Commons Integration

Key Question: How does the Digital Commons implementation interact with environmental commons?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
# of integrated environmental initiatives				
Environmental outcomes improved				
# of shared governance mechanisms				
Community participation in both commons				
Resource sharing between commons				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How do digital and environmental commons support each other?

2. What tensions exist between digital and environmental priorities?

3. What opportunities for deeper integration exist?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Project documentation
- ☐ Governance records
- ☐ Outcome measurements
- ☐ Stakeholder interviews
- ☐ Other: _____

7.2 Economic Commons Integration

Key Question: How does the Digital Commons implementation interact with economic commons?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
# of integrated economic initiatives				
Economic outcomes improved				
# of shared governance mechanisms				
Community participation in both commons				
Resource sharing between commons				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. How do digital and economic commons support each other?

2. What tensions exist between digital and economic priorities?

3. What opportunities for deeper integration exist?

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Project documentation

- ☐ Governance records

- ☐ Outcome measurements

- ☐ Stakeholder interviews

- ☐ Other: _____

7.3 Other Commons Integration

Key Question: How does the Digital Commons implementation interact with other types of commons?

Quantitative Indicators:

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Change	Target
# of other commons integrated with				
Outcomes improved in other commons				
# of shared governance mechanisms				
Community participation across multiple commons				
Resource sharing between commons				

Qualitative Assessment:

1. What other commons systems interact with digital commons?

2. How has digital commons affected other commons systems?

3. What opportunities for expanded cross-commons work exist?

_____

_____

Evidence Sources:

- ☐ Project documentation
- ☐ Governance records
- ☐ Outcome measurements
- ☐ Stakeholder interviews
- ☐ Other: _____

7.4 Cross-Commons Summary

Key Findings:

_____

_____

_____

Areas of Strength:

_____

_____

Areas for Improvement:

_____

_____

Priority Actions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Section 8: Analysis and Recommendations

8.1 Consolidated Findings

Overall Impact Rating:

- ☐ Transformative: Significant positive change across multiple dimensions
- ☐ Substantial: Clear positive impacts with some areas needing improvement
- ☐ Moderate: Mixed results with both positive outcomes and challenges
- ☐ Limited: Minimal positive impact with significant implementation issues
- ☐ Negative: Detrimental effects requiring immediate intervention

Key Strengths:

1.

2.

3.

Key Challenges:

1.

2.

3.

Unexpected Outcomes:

Community Priorities Identified:

8.2 Strategic Recommendations

Short-Term Actions (Next 3 months):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Medium-Term Initiatives (3-12 months):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Long-Term Strategies (1-3 years):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Resource Needs Identified:

_____

_____

8.3 Knowledge Contribution

Insights for Broader Framework:

_____

Innovative Approaches Developed:

_____

_____

Recommendations for Framework Evolution:

_____

_____

8.4 Next Assessment Planning

Recommended Timeline: _____

Focus Areas for Next Assessment:

_____

_____

Methodological Improvements:

_____

_____

_____

Low-Resource Implementation Guide

For communities with limited time, expertise, or resources, this simplified approach focuses on essential elements:

Essential Questions Approach

If you cannot complete the full template, focus on these core questions:

1. **Access and Inclusion**:

   - Who has gained access to digital resources, and who remains excluded?

   - Has participation in governance become more inclusive or remained limited?

2. **Benefits and Harms**:

   ○ What positive changes has the community experienced?

   ○ Have any negative consequences occurred, and for whom?

3. **Cultural Respect**:

   ○ How have local cultural practices and knowledge been affected?

   ○ Do community members feel their culture is respected and strengthened?

4. **Governance Quality**:

   ○ Are decisions made transparently and inclusively?

   ○ Do community members feel represented in governance?

5. **Economic Effects**:

   ○ What economic benefits or costs have resulted?

   ○ How equitably are resources and benefits distributed?

6. **Priorities for Improvement**:

   ○ What changes would most improve community outcomes?

   ○ What resources or support would help address challenges?

Community Dialogue Method

1. Gather 10-15 diverse community members for a 2-3 hour discussion

2. Ask the essential questions, ensuring all voices are heard

3. Document key points using simple recording methods:
   ○ Audio recording with permission

   ○ Note-taking by a designated scribe

   ○ Visual documentation (drawings, charts) for key points

4. Summarize findings and verify with participants

5. Identify 3-5 priority actions

6. Document in Field-Test Logbook

Visual Assessment Option

For communities preferring visual communication:

- Use the Impact Mapping Canvas (available in PDF)
- Create a visual representation of:
    - Community members (showing who benefits/participates)
    - Digital resources (showing what's accessible and by whom)
    - Outcomes (showing changes experienced)
    - Challenges (showing barriers and problems)
    - Actions (showing priorities for improvement)

Minimal Documentation Format

One-page assessment summary:

```
IMPACT ASSESSMENT SUMMARY
Node: [Name] - [Date]
Participation: [Who was involved in assessment]
Strengths: [Top 3 positive impacts]
Challenges: [Top 3 problems or barriers]
Benefits: [Who benefits and how]
Exclusions: [Who remains excluded and why]
Priority Actions: [Top 3-5 next steps]
```

Verification Protocol

To ensure assessment quality and credibility, consider these verification approaches:

Internal Verification

- **Multiple Perspectives**: Include at least 3 different stakeholder groups in assessment
- **Data Triangulation**: Use at least 2 different methods to confirm key findings
- **Community Validation**: Present findings to broader community for feedback
- **Documentation Review**: Examine Field-Test Logbook and other records

Regional Hub Verification

- Submit assessment to Regional Hub for review

- Request peer review from 1-2 other nodes

- Participate in regional assessment coordination calls

- Incorporate feedback into final report

Independent Verification (If Available)

- Request third-party reviewer if significant findings or conflicts

- Consider academic or NGO partnerships for methodological support

- Document verification process and any modifications to findings

Verification Levels

- **Bronze Standard**: Basic assessment with community validation

- **Silver Standard**: Comprehensive assessment with peer review

- **Gold Standard**: Extensive mixed-methods with expert panel verification

- **Platinum Standard**: Longitudinal study with global audit verification

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Resources

Available at globalgovernanceframework.org/tools/digital/assessment:

- Complete Assessment Toolkit

- Survey Templates (digital and printable)

- Interview Guides

- Indicator Calculation Tools

- Visual Assessment Materials

- Analysis Worksheets

- Low-Resource Assessment Guide

- Training Videos

Support Resources:

- Email globalgovernanceframework@gmail.com

- Regional Hub assessment coordinators

- Monthly assessment support calls (first Thursday)

- Assessment peer learning network

Call to Action: Regular, thoughtful impact assessment is essential for ensuring the Digital Commons Framework truly benefits communities and evolves to meet their needs. Begin by conducting a baseline assessment of your implementation, then schedule regular evaluations to track progress and identify areas for improvement. Remember that the process itself builds community understanding and ownership of the commons. Download the complete Impact Assessment Toolkit at globalgovernanceframework.org/tools/digital/assessment.

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