Digital Commons in Practice Documentation

A Template for Capturing and Sharing Implementation Experiences

Version 1.0 - Global Governance Framework

Overview

This template provides a structured format for documenting real-world implementations of the Digital Commons Framework. By systematically capturing experiences, challenges, and innovations from diverse contexts, we create a valuable knowledge base that strengthens the commons ecosystem. This documentation serves multiple purposes:

- **Knowledge Transfer**: Enable lessons to be shared across regions and contexts
- **Implementation Support**: Guide new adopters with practical examples
- **Evidence Base**: Build a foundation for framework refinement and evolution
- **Community Building**: Connect practitioners facing similar challenges
- **Impact Tracking**: Document the real-world effects of digital commons governance

Use this template to document your implementation experience, adapting sections as needed to suit your context while maintaining a consistent structure for cross-case comparison.

Documentation Template

1. Implementation Context

Node Identifier: [Official node ID if registered, or descriptive name]

Location: [Geographic location - region/country/community]

Time Period: [When implementation began, current status]

Community Type: [Urban/rural/mixed, approximate size, key demographic information]

Digital Context: [Pre-existing digital infrastructure, connectivity, literacy levels]

Implementation Path: [Which pathway from Appendix F was followed: A, B, C, or D]

Primary Focus Areas: [Main digital commons components being implemented]

Key Stakeholders: [Core team composition, partner organizations, community groups]

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2. Getting Started

Initiation Story: [Brief narrative of how and why the implementation began]

Initial Goals: [What the node set out to accomplish at the beginning]

Resource Assessment: [Available resources, constraints, and gaps identified]

First Steps: [The initial actions taken to establish the node]

Community Engagement: [How stakeholders were involved from the beginning]

Timeline: [Key dates in the establishment process]

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3. Governance Implementation

Governance Model: [Description of the specific governance approach adopted]

Decision-Making Processes: [How proposals are made, discussed, and approved]

Participation Mechanisms: [Tools and methods used to enable participation]

- Technical tools: [e.g., SMS voting, digital platforms, mesh networks]
- Non-technical approaches: [e.g., community meetings, paper systems, oral traditions]

Cultural Adaptations: [How governance was adapted to local cultural contexts]

Documentation System: [How decisions and processes are recorded]

Metrics: [Participation rates, decision efficiency, community satisfaction]

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4. Technical Implementation

Digital Infrastructure: [Technical systems deployed to support the commons]

- Hardware: [Physical infrastructure components]
- Software: [Key applications, platforms, and tools]
- Networks: [Connectivity solutions implemented]

Data Sovereignty: [How community control over data is maintained]

Ethical AI: [Any AI governance mechanisms implemented]

Knowledge Commons: [How information is shared and preserved]

Accessibility Features: [How technical systems were made accessible to all]

Technical Challenges: [Key technical obstacles encountered]

Solutions Developed: [Innovations or adaptations to address technical challenges]

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5. Challenges and Solutions

Major Obstacles: [Significant challenges encountered]

1. [Challenge 1]
    - Description: [What the challenge involved]
    - Impact: [How it affected implementation]
    - Solution: [How it was addressed or mitigated]
    - Outcome: [Results of the solution]
2. [Challenge 2]
    - Description:
    - Impact:
    - Solution:

    - Outcome:

3. [Challenge 3]
    - Description:
    - Impact:
    - Solution:
    - Outcome:

Unexpected Difficulties: [Surprising or unforeseen challenges]

Resource Constraints: [How limited resources were managed]

External Factors: [Political, environmental, or social factors that influenced implementation]

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6. Innovations and Adaptations

Local Innovations: [Novel approaches developed by the node]

Framework Adaptations: [How the framework was modified to fit local context]

Cross-Pollination: [Ideas borrowed from or shared with other nodes]

Cultural Integration: [How local cultural practices were incorporated]

Resource Optimization: [Creative approaches to making the most of available resources]

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7. Outcomes and Impact

Primary Achievements: [Main successes of the implementation]

Quantitative Metrics: [Measurable outcomes]

- Participation: [e.g., percentage of community engaged]
- Access: [e.g., number of people with new digital access]
- Resources: [e.g., amount of data or code contributed to commons]
- Other metrics: [Context-specific measurements]

Qualitative Impact: [Less measurable but significant effects]

- Community stories: [Brief narratives illustrating impact]
- Observed changes: [Shifts in practices, relationships, or capabilities]
- Testimonials: [Direct quotes from community members]

Unexpected Benefits: [Positive outcomes that weren't initially anticipated]

Negative or Neutral Outcomes: [Honest assessment of areas without positive impact]

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8. Lessons Learned

Key Insights: [Most important lessons from this implementation]

Critical Success Factors: [What made the difference between success and failure]

What We Would Do Differently: [Changes that would be made if starting over]

Advice for Similar Contexts: [Recommendations for nodes in comparable situations]

Advice for Different Contexts: [Which elements might or might not transfer to other settings]

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9. Future Plans

Next Steps: [Immediate plans for continuing development]

Medium-Term Goals: [Objectives for the next 1-3 years]

Scaling Strategies: [How the implementation might grow or replicate]

Sustainability Plan: [How the node will maintain itself over time]

Unresolved Challenges: [Issues still needing solutions]

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10. Resources and Contacts

Documentation: [Links to more detailed documentation, if available]

Code Repositories: [Links to any open-source code developed]

Resource Materials: [Templates, guides, or other materials created]

Contact Information: [How to reach the node for more information]

- Primary contact: [Name, role, contact details]
- Secondary contact: [Name, role, contact details]
- Web presence: [Website, social media, or other online presence]

Visiting/Collaboration Opportunities: [How others can engage directly]

Documentation Guidelines

When to Document

- **Initial Implementation**: Create a first version after 3-6 months of operation
- **Major Milestones**: Update after significant achievements or changes
- **Annual Updates**: Provide at least yearly revisions to track progress
- **Upon Innovation**: Document whenever significant new approaches are developed
- **Case Closure**: Create a final version if the node ceases operation

Documentation Quality

For maximum usefulness to the commons community, aim for:

- **Specificity**: Include concrete details rather than general statements
- **Honesty**: Document failures and challenges as thoroughly as successes
- **Accessibility**: Write in clear language accessible to non-specialists
- **Balance**: Give appropriate attention to both social and technical aspects
- **Evidence**: Support claims with data, examples, and documentation
- **Context**: Provide enough background for others to understand your situation
- **Practical Focus**: Emphasize actionable insights over theoretical observations

Sharing Your Documentation

1. Submit to your Regional Digital Hub for inclusion in the Knowledge Commons
2. Share directly with other nodes in your region or with similar focus areas
3. Present at Digital Commons gatherings, virtual or in-person
4. Contribute to the Field-Test Logbook Repository on the framework's collaborative platform
5. Discuss and refine through the Digital Commons Forum

Example: Excerpt from Senegal Health Data Commons Documentation

> ***Node Identifier**: SN-027-Thiès*
>
> ***Location**: Thiès Region, Senegal, West Africa*
>
> ***Time Period**: March 2026 - Present (documentation as of November 2027)*
>
> ***Community Type**: Rural village cluster, 7 villages, approximately 3,000 residents total*
>
> ***Digital Context**: Limited connectivity (2G mobile coverage), 60% mobile phone ownership, 15% smartphone ownership, 30% text literacy rate*
>
> ***Implementation Path**: Path A (Minimal-Viable Node) with selected Path B elements*
>
> ***Primary Focus Areas**: Open Data Commons (health data), Knowledge Commons (health education)*
>
> ***Key Stakeholders**:*
>
> - *Village health workers (5)*
> - *Traditional healers (3)*
> - *Youth technology champions (4)*
> - *Local government health office*
> - *Regional hospital*
> - *NGO partner: Digital Health Access Initiative*
>
> *[Excerpt from Governance Implementation section]*

***Participation Mechanisms**: The node faced significant challenges with digital participation due to low connectivity and text literacy. We developed a hybrid approach:*

- ***SMS Voting**: For text-literate members, we implemented a simplified SMS voting system that uses numeric codes rather than text (1=yes, 2=no, 3=abstain). Example: "VOTE 27-05 1" to approve proposal 05. This system includes verification through a community-verified phone number registry.*
- ***Voice Message System**: For members uncomfortable with text, we established a WhatsApp voice message group where proposals are explained verbally, and members can respond with voice votes. Youth technology champions transcribe these for the record.*
- ***Physical Voting Stations**: During weekly markets, we set up voting stations where community members can vote on current proposals using a simple paper system with village-specific validation stamps.*
- ***Community Radio**: Major proposals are announced via community radio, with call-in sessions for discussion.*

***Cultural Adaptations**: Traditional decision-making in our region typically involves extended family heads meeting to build consensus. We adapted this by:*

- *Appointing family representatives to a "Digital Health Council" that meets monthly*
- *Integrating traditional healers into the data classification process*
- *Using existing trust networks for verification rather than technical mechanisms*
- *Establishing a ceremony for "opening the data season" each year, led by village elders*

***Metrics**: After 18 months of operation, we achieved:*

- *65% of adults participating in at least one vote*
- *80% of decisions achieving super-majority consensus (>75% approval)*
- *15-20 day average for decision completion (proposal to implementation)*

Submission Information

Complete documentation should be submitted to your Regional Digital Hub and to the Global Digital Commons Council via:

Email: documentation@globalgovernanceframework.org
Repository: github.com/digitalcommons/field-documentation
Web Form: globalgovernanceframework.org/submit-documentation

For assistance with documentation, contact your Regional Digital Hub or email support@globalgovernanceframework.org.

This template is available in 50 languages and in multiple formats (including audio, large print, and braille) at globalgovernanceframework.org/tools/digital/documentation-template