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Foreword

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This document was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 40, *IT service management and IT governance*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html and www.iec.ch/national-committees.

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Introduction

This document has been developed to give informative material to support decision-making processes that prioritize equitable access, transparency, accountability, and the sustainable use of IT in ways that foster digital inclusion. This document is applicable to organizations that aim to integrate the perspectives on digital inclusion into their governance of IT practices.

Digital inclusion is an aspect of Social Inclusion which involves ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from the digital services or technologies linked activities and decisions of an organization. It involves creating an inclusive digital environment that values diversity, removes barriers, fosters participation, and aligns with principles of social responsibility by recognizing the broader societal impacts of organizational decisions in the digital sphere. Users who can benefit from digital inclusion can be those with age-related, physical or mental impairments; or those who have no experience or confidence with digital services; and those with no access to digital services.

Digital Inclusion strategies are often shaped by legal and ethical considerations, as many jurisdictions have introduced laws and policies that promote diversity and Inclusion. For organizations, particularly those that provide services to citizens or consumers, embracing digital inclusion is vital. It enhances their reputation as responsible corporate citizens and ensures that their digital services can reach and benefit a broader segment of the community.

Effective digital inclusion strategies can expand access to a wider talent pool, increase employee satisfaction, and drive innovation. By prioritizing digital inclusion, organizations contribute positively to society while achieving sustainable growt

However, digital inclusion does not happen by chance. Achieving this depends on having a clear vision, strong leadership, well-defined policies, and adequate resources. Implementing digital inclusion aligns with the principles of good governance, ensuring accountability, strategic alignment, and the effective use of resources to foster an inclusive digital future.

This document provides guidance on the governance implications of digital inclusion. Within the International Standards arena, the guidance in the areas of governance of information technology falls within the scope of ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 40.

The primary intended audience for this document is the governing body. It is also relevant to those involved in developing organizational policies and standards.

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Information technology — Governance of IT — Responsible governance of IT for digital inclusion

1 Scope

This document describes the governance implications of digital inclusion.

It is intended for governing bodies and policy makers of all types of organizations (whether large or small) in the private, public and non-profit sectors.

It provides perspectives on digital inclusion considerations, the role of governing bodies in ensuring organisations address these considerations, as well as governance practices.

It is not intended or appropriate for certification purposes or for regulatory or contractual use.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
governance
system of directing and controlling

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 38500:2024 [1], 3.3]

3.2
governance framework, noun
strategies, policies, decision-making structures and accountabilities through which the organization's *Governance* (3.1) arrangements operate

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC TR 38502:2017 [2], 3.1]

3.3
social responsibility, noun
responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that

— contributes to sustainable development, including the health and the welfare of society;

— takes into account the expectations of stakeholders;

— is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and

— is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its relationships

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[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010 [3], 2.18, modified — Notes to entry removed.]

3.4
inclusive behaviour, noun
conduct that promotes *Inclusion* (3.10)

[SOURCE: ISO 30415:2021 [4], 3.14, modified — Notes to entry removed.]

3.5
fairness, noun
principle that everyone is subject to policies, processes, and practices that are equitable and, as far as possible, free from systematic bias

[SOURCE: ISO 30400:2022 [5], 3.7.14]

3.6
accessibility, noun
extent to which products, systems, services, environments and facilities can be used by people from a population with the widest range of user needs, characteristics and capabilities to achieve identified goals in identified contexts of use

[SOURCE: ISO 9241-112:2017 [6], 3.15]

3.7
usability, noun
extent to which a system, product or service can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use

[SOURCE: ISO 9241-210:2010 [7], 2.13]

3.8
human factors, noun
ergonomics, noun
scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among human and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance

[SOURCE: ISO 26800:2011 [8], 2.2, modified — Note 1 to entry removed.]

3.9
HCD, noun
human-centred design, noun
approach to system design and development that aims to make interactive systems more usable by focussing on the use of the system; applying human factors/*Ergonomics* (3.8) and *Usability* (3.7) knowledge and techniques

[SOURCE: ISO 9241-210:2010 [7], 3.7, modified — Notes to entry removed.]

3.10
inclusiveness, noun
inclusion, noun
process of including all stakeholders

Note 1 to entry: This involves stakeholders from different groups being accepted, welcomed, enabled to have a voice, and to develop a sense of belonging.

[SOURCE: ISO 25550:2022 [9], 3.11 — modified, deleted “in organizational contexts”, deleted Note 1 to entry, deleted Note 2 to entry, and changed “Note 3 to entry” to “Note 1 to entry”.]

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3.11
reasonable adjustment, noun
reasonable accommodation, noun
necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy or exercise on an equal basis with others all human rights and fundamental freedoms

Note 1 to entry: In order to avoid confusion, *Reasonable Adjustment* (3.11) is the term used in this document.

[SOURCE: United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 2, available at https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html [10], modified — "reasonable adjustment" is now the permitted term.]

3.12
digital inclusion, noun
equitable, meaningful, and safe access to use, lead, and design digital technologies, services, and associated opportunities for everyone, everywhere

[SOURCE: UN Round Table – Digital Inclusion, available at https://social.desa.un.org/issues/poverty-eradication/digital-inclusion[11]]

3.13
adaptive technology, noun
technology used by individuals with disabilities to enable the performance of functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible

Note 1 to entry: Adapted from the definition of *assistive technology* by the World Health Organization (WHO).

3.14
social inclusion
process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society to improve the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity

[SOURCE: World Bank Group - Social Inclusion, available at https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion[12]]

3.15
trustworthiness
ability to meet stakeholders' expectations in a verifiable way

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC TS 5723:2022 [13], 3.1]

4 Good Governance and Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion, the equitable access to and effective use of digital technologies and services, is essential for ensuring that all individuals and communities can participate fully in the digital economy and society. The governance of digital inclusion requires intentional leadership, inclusive policies, and accountable decision-making structures that embed inclusivity as a strategic objective, not a peripheral concern. Governance is the system through which an organization is directed, controlled, and held accountable.

Good governance means that decision-making within the organization is based on the organization’s ethos, culture, norms, practices, behaviours, structures and processes.

Good governance can assist organizations in achieving three broad outcomes:

— Effective performance: Ensuring that organizational objectives are efficiently, effectively and continuously met.

— Responsible stewardship: Managing resources sustainably for current and future needs.

— Ethical behaviour: Upholding values and ethical standards in all organizational activities.

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