

Digital Investments Factors

1. Be user-centred and prioritise usability

What does this mean?

Users are the most important consideration in seeking to achieve a desired investment outcome. Every solution has users, even those that are internal. Two concepts apply to ensure investments deliver for its users, user-centred design and usability.

User-centred design means involving users in an investment from the start, all the way through to operation and management. By involving users from the start of the process, the end product is less likely to have moved away from solving the issues faced by users, due to problem-solving throughout the build.

Usability means that a solution is developed to be easy to use. All solutions should be usable, including solutions that use off-the-shelf products. A product that meets all the business requirements of users, but requires an intensive investment of time to learn, has likely not prioritised usability.

Why is this important?

Investments need to be easy to use and have a consistent user experience.

Designing an investment in a user-centred way with a focus on usability encourages use of the solution which helps reduce duplication. By encouraging users to stay in the digital channel agencies can also avoid them moving to more expensive channels, such as phone or face-to-face.

Greater usability can result in fewer mistakes being made by users and better data quality. [Read more about usability on our blog.](#)

How might buyers do this?

Buyers can:

- Hire user research and service design specialists, who can help make their investments more user-centred.
- Use the [Digital Service Standard](#), which can help them understand user needs and provides approaches and guidance (especially regarding user research).

- Create metrics (such as [user satisfaction](#)) and measurements to evaluate how their investment is meeting user needs.
- Involve users in research, testing, proof of concept or prototypes, and implementation.
- Consider internal users and their needs. Even hardware and components supporting a broader solution have a user.
- Ensure the investment is accessible. A major component of usability is accessibility (covered in more detail in section 4.1).

2. Seek advice early and consult widely

What does this mean?

Buyers can achieve better outcomes by learning from technology, industry and procurement experts. Learning from others allows buyers to challenge traditional practices and explore new possibilities. Buyers should be curious by seeking out those who have solved similar problems, as they may be able to provide useful advice or reusable solutions.

Why is this important?

Many challenges are not unique to an agency, they are faced across government. Failed investments are often the result of not receiving the right advice at the right time. The later buyers seek advice, the more likely they will spend additional time, resources and effort retrofitting their investment.

Early advice gives buyers more options, opportunities to collaborate and helps them find innovative solutions.

How might buyers do this?

Buyers can:

- Engage with others in government who can help them consider whether they need to invest in a new solution. There may be an existing solution that the buyer can reuse.
- Engage with industry to help them access product and technology experience that is not readily available in government.
- Use an outcomes-based approach to combine agency knowledge of the problem with industry expertise in providing solutions.

- Engage with industry to help them avoid a preconceived solution that may be more expensive and less effective at addressing their business needs.
- Engage with their corporate or IT area to help determine whether their investment would work with the agency's architecture and technology roadmap.

3. Consider the whole-of-life cost

What does this mean?

When investing, buyers should consider the whole-of-life cost. Whole-of-life cost is much more than the initial price. Whole-of-life cost includes the initial purchase price of a solution, maintenance costs, transition out costs, licensing costs (where applicable), the cost of additional features added after the initial investment, consumable costs and disposal costs.

Why is this important?

A low initial cost does not necessarily mean a solution will represent [Value for Money](#). Costs incurred after the initial purchase can often change the whole-of-life cost. This means a solution with a low initial cost could have a high whole-of-life cost. Considering whole-of-life cost is a key component of assessing [Value for Money](#).

How might buyers do this?

Buyers can:

- Take into consideration that while immediate costs may be low, whole-of-life cost can be high. They should consider factors including the initial purchase price of a solution, maintenance costs, transition out costs, licensing costs (where applicable), the cost of additional features added after the initial investment, consumable costs and disposal costs.
- Consider technology costs such as architecture, administration, integration, support and training.

4. Align with whole-of-government requirements

What does this mean?

The Australian Government has important whole-of-government requirements which are directly relevant to investments. Some of the most important whole-of-government requirements are listed below. Other whole-of-government requirements may apply to particular investments.

Why is this important?

Aligning with whole-of-government requirements as early as possible will help investments succeed and help buyers to collaborate with other agencies on common solutions. This will also help agencies in meeting their responsibilities in line with the expectations of the Australian Government.

Failing to plan for whole-of-government requirements can lead to issues including project delays, unexpected costs, increased sustainment costs, greater integration costs and unnecessary effort. For example, retrofitting accessibility is costly, but it can often be included for no or low cost as part of the initial design.

How might buyers do this?

Buyers can consider the 4 whole-of-government requirements below. These are:

- [4.1 Accessibility](#)
- [4.2 Privacy and security](#)
- [4.3 Australian Government Architecture](#)
- [4.4 Digital and ICT Reuse](#)

4.1 Accessibility

Accessibility is not limited to government websites, it applies to a broad range of digital solutions, including, but not limited to, software, hardware and services.

Buyers should seek to make their investment accessible from the start. Retrofitting investments in order to meet accessibility requirements is costly and time-consuming and unlikely to deliver a suitable product.

Key accessibility standards are linked below. Other accessibility standards may be applicable to particular investments.

The major requirements are the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#), [The APS Disability Employment Strategy 2016-19](#) and the [Australian Standard for accessibility \(AS EN 301 549:2020\)](#)

The [Commonwealth Procurement Rules](#) contain mandatory requirements for applying Australian Standards, this is relevant to most investments subject to this policy. If the Australian Standard for Accessibility (AS EN 301 549:2016) is applicable to a buyer's goods or services being procured:

- Tender responses must demonstrate the capability to meet that standard.
- Contracts must contain evidence of that standard, and include periodic auditing of compliance.

For more information, refer to the:

- [Commonwealth Procurement Rules' paragraph 7.26](#)
- [Commonwealth Procurement Rules' paragraph 10.11](#)

More information about this requirement is available at [Standard 9 \(Make it Accessible\)](#) of the [Digital Service Standard](#).

If buyers are still unsure how these standards can be implemented as part of their investment, they should seek advice from an accessibility expert.

4.2 Privacy and security

Privacy, security and the proper use of personal data is relevant for all investments.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring secure delivery of government business and continuing to build trust and confidence in its engagement with and management of security risks.

It is important to note that buyer responsibilities do not end with their agency, but also extend to sellers they engage. Buyers should make sure their investment is set up to ensure sellers adhere to relevant conditions and follow Australian Privacy Principles.

Buyers can get more information about their security responsibilities at the links below.

- Agencies must meet the four security outcomes set out in the [Protective Security Framework](#). Agencies can do this by implementing the framework's requirements and using security measures proportionately to address their unique security risk environments.
- The [Australian Government Information Security Manual \(ISM\)](#) helps agencies use their risk management framework to protect information and systems from cyber threats. The cyber security guidelines within the ISM are based on the experience of the Australian Cyber Security Centre within the Australian

Signals Directorate. When addressing privacy and security, agencies should keep in mind their records management obligations. More information about requirements for records management is available from the [National Archives of Australia](#)

4.3 Australian Government Architecture

The Australian Government Architecture is a decision-making and policy framework that helps agencies develop scalable, secure, and resilient digital capabilities.

As a key part of the Whole-of-Government [Digital and ICT Investment Oversight Framework](#), the architecture:

- provides guidance to agencies on how to deliver capabilities faster and in a way that is consistent, interoperable, promotes reuse, represents less risk and ensures value for money
- sets clear signals for industry in describing the way in which capabilities are expected to be delivered
- supports agency decision-making and creates transparency by publishing standards and patterns for digital and ICT capabilities
- identifies gaps in capabilities and emerging technology where investment is required.

4.4 Digital and ICT Reuse

The Australian Government has a whole of government focus on reuse of digital and ICT capabilities. Reuse enables simple, clear and fast government services through standardisation and reuse of common artefacts, processes, and/or solutions.

Under the [Digital and ICT Reuse Policy](#), agencies must consider the Digital and ICT reuse requirements when designing, proposing, or delivering new government capabilities with a digital and ICT component or improving existing ones. The 3 requirements are:

- Reuse whenever possible – your proposed investments must plan for and make use of any opportunities to reuse existing services or tools within your agency and across government.
- Design and build for reuse – if your proposed investment cannot reuse an existing digital or ICT solution, you must ensure that a the service you build, can be reused by other agencies.

- Enable reuse by others – you must ensure anything you create is shared for others to reuse unless there's a good reason not to.

The DTA assesses Digital and ICT proposals against the policy. This assessment covers proposals to change or create all types of government services that meet the following criteria:

- are digital and/or ICT enabled and
- have a total whole-of-life ICT cost of \$10 million or more.

Agencies are expected to apply the policy at each stage of the digital and ICT investment lifecycle.