

# GLOBAL DIGITAL ECONOMY LIGHTHOUSE PROGRAM



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*Identifying, recognizing, and scaling digital innovations that drive inclusive and sustainable development worldwide*

### I. Background and Rationale: Why a Lighthouse?

Despite digital technologies reshaping the global economy and society at an unprecedented pace, approximately **2.6 billion people** worldwide remain offline. Women, youth, rural populations, persons with disabilities, and micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are disproportionately excluded from the digital dividend. Cities, local governments, and communities – particularly in low- and middle-income countries – often lack the capacity to adopt and scale appropriate digital solutions.

The **Global Digital Compact**, adopted at the **UN Summit of the Future**, calls for a shared framework to ensure digital technologies serve human progress, bridge digital divides, foster inclusive data governance, and harness technology for the benefit of all. This initiative is a concrete response and an action-oriented commitment to that global consensus.

We firmly believe: **digital excellence exists at every level of development** – whether in smart cities in high-income countries or community-based digital services in low-income nations; regardless of budget size. Any solution that effectively addresses development pain points, delivers verifiable value, and has replication potential deserves to be seen, accredited, and scaled.



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## II. Core Objectives and Mission

### Core Objectives

#### 1. Build a Global Case Repository

Identify and document digital innovations with verifiable value from diverse development contexts, establishing a benchmark for global digital economy innovation practices.

#### 2. Produce Actionable Public Goods

Develop the *Global Digital Economy Lighthouse Case Collection (2026)* and related knowledge products, generating standardized and reusable practice templates.

#### 3. Foster Peer Learning

Promote South-South cooperation, triangular cooperation, and cross-regional exchanges to help countries – especially developing and least developed regions – achieve digital transformation and upgrading.

#### 4. Accelerate Localization of the Global Digital Compact

Demonstrate how digital innovations advance global frameworks at the local level, facilitating the standardized replication and scaled implementation of outstanding cases.

### Mission

To identify and accredit high-quality digital solutions with significant public value and industrial empowerment potential, build a cross-regional, cross-sectoral, and cross-scenario global platform for digital practice exchange, and empower global sustainable development through digital innovation.

## III. What Is a “Lighthouse Case”?



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The term “**Lighthouse**” embodies three core meanings:

- **Guidance** – Illuminating the path for those who follow;
- **Validation** – Proven through practice and demonstrable results;
- **Empowerment** – Enabling others to find their own way based on proven models.

Lighthouse Cases refer to exemplary digital practices implemented by various industry entities in the digital economy sector, including enterprises, industrial parks, universities and research institutions, international organizations, industry associations and alliances. It leverages digital technologies to address socioeconomic development pain points precisely, demonstrating stable operational capacity, verifiable value outcomes, and potential for replication and scaling.

## Six Core Characteristics

Characteristic	Description
Demand-driven	Addresses real development challenges and societal needs, with digital technologies applied to solve clearly identified problems
Verifiable results	Supported by a complete evidence chain, with core results that are measurable, traceable, and independently assessable.
Inclusive and beneficial	Prioritizes benefits for women, rural communities, persons with disabilities, youth, residents of least



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	developed countries (LDCs), and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).
Green and sustainable	Delivers measurable environmental benefits through energy efficiency, carbon reduction, resource circularity, or related sustainability outcomes.
Trustworthy governance	Adheres to digital ethics and data security principles, with appropriate human oversight and no significant compliance risks.
Replicable and scalable	Establishes a standardized model that can be adapted and replicated across regions and development contexts.

## IV. Case Collection Categories (Six Thematic Areas)

Area	Focus Areas
Digital Urban Governance	Urban operations and management, digital public services, decision-support systems
Inclusive Digital Public Services	Inclusive financing, distance education, online healthcare, accessible services
Green and Resilient Urban Development	Energy efficiency and carbon reduction, climate adaptation, circular resource use, low-carbon alternatives

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Digital Economy and Local Livelihood	Digital agriculture and e-commerce for farmers, digital employment, MSME empowerment, local supply chain digitalization
Smart Mobility and Spatial Digital Construction	Intelligent transportation, logistics optimization, spatial planning, Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS)
Social Inclusion for Vulnerable Groups	Women's digital empowerment, disability inclusion, aging services, youth development

## V. Eligibility Requirements and Evaluation Framework

### Minimum Requirements

Criterion	Requirement
Operational maturity	Implemented and stably operated for <b>at least 6 months</b>
Problem response	Addresses a specific development challenge with verifiable outcomes
Inclusivity	Generates benefits for underserved groups (women, youth, rural populations, persons with disabilities, MSMEs)
Compliance	No major safety, data privacy, ethical, or legal incidents in the past <b>3 years</b>



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Framework alignment	Contributes to the <b>Global Digital Compact</b> , the <b>2030 Agenda</b> , or comparable frameworks
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## Comprehensive Evaluation Indicator Framework

Dimension	Weight	Sub-indicators
Impact	50	Problem-solving capacity (15), inclusive empowerment (15), green and low-carbon performance(10), and industrial ecosystem empowerment (10)
Scalability	20	Validated scalability (10), cross-scenario replicability (10)
Sustainability	20	Local context adaptability (10), local operational autonomy (10)
Trustworthiness	10	Ethical compliance management (5), data security safeguards (5)

## Diversity Principles in Evaluation

- Income-based categorization (high/middle/low income)
- Global South calibration (+2-3 points for qualifying cases)
- Diversity cap (no single income category shall account for more than 60% of the total selected cases)

## VI. Benefits

Selected Global Digital Economy Lighthouse Cases will receive:

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Value Dimension	Specific Benefits
Global Recognition	Official certificate (Lighthouse Award / Honorable Mention / Selected Case Award) jointly issued by ITU, ITC, DEC40, and GSLDC, recognizing your case as a globally endorsed benchmark in digital innovation within the UN ecosystem.
Permanent Knowledge Asset	Case inclusion in the <i>Global Digital Economy Lighthouse Case Collection (2026)</i> , publicly accessible on the websites of the four organizing institutions as global public goods.
Premier International Platform	Invited to present at the <b>Global Digital Economy Conference (Beijing, 2 July 2026)</b> or the <b>AI for Good Global Summit (Geneva, 2nd week of July 2026)</b> , engaging directly with global decision-makers and investors.
Global Replication Support	Join the “Lighthouse Cooperation Network” with priority access to cross-regional technical assistance, partnership matching, and facilitation of pilot-scale funding to support replication across countries of diverse development levels
Honorable Mention Opportunities	Eligibility for Honorable Mention recognition in four priority SDG-aligned areas: South-South cooperation, MSME empowerment, climate action, and gender equality

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Global SDGs and Leadership  
Development Center

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Long-term Branding	Authorized to use the “Global Digital Economy Lighthouse Program” logo; participation in year-round global roadshows, media outreach, and joint branding initiatives to enhance international visibility and influence
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## VII. Key Dates

Phase	Date	Key Activities
Global Call for Submissions (Round I)	From now – 15 June	Submission of application
Round I Evaluation and Notification	16 – 25 June	Application screening, independent expert review, score discrepancy checks, cross-regional calibration; <b>official notification to selected cases by 25 June</b>
Launch of Round I Outstanding Cases	2 July	Awards ceremony and keynote showcase at the <b>Global Digital Economy Conference (Beijing)</b>
International Summit Showcase & Rolling Call Launch	Second week of July	Showcase outstanding cases at the <b>AI for Good Global Summit (Geneva)</b> ; launch the second rolling call for submissions.
Round II Submission and Evaluation	July – August	Submission of supplementary materials, Round II applications, expert review process.

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Final Assessment & Casebook Launch	September	Complete all 2026 evaluations; officially release the <i>Global Digital Economy Lighthouse Case Collection (2026)</i> in digital and print formats.
Global Dissemination & Partnerships Development	September – December	Global roadshows, South-South cooperation matchmaking, technical assistance pilots, and partner engagement to support cross-regional replication and scaling of outstanding cases.

## VIII. How to Participate

### Participation Pathways

- **Self-application:** Submit complete materials via the official application platform.
- **Nomination by an institution:** Send the name and type of your institution, the nominated case, and the nominee institution’s details to the program email address. The program team will follow up with the nominee.

### Submission Requirements

- **Language:** English (case narrative: 1500–2500 words)
- **Core materials:** Online application form, Full case description report, Institutional legal qualification document



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## Application Portals

- Global SDGs and Leadership Development Center official website: <https://unsdgleadershipcenter.org/events/lighthouse-program/>
- DEC40 official website: <https://www.dec40.org/lighthouse-program>

## IX. Copyright and Terms of Use

By submitting the application, the applicant certifies the accuracy of all information, confirms no compliance incidents in the past 3 years. The applicant agrees, if selected, to undergo verification and publication, and grants the organizers a non-exclusive license for non-commercial knowledge sharing. While selected outcomes will be publicly promoted and disseminated, the organizing institution guarantees strict confidentiality for all raw data and non-public information submitted. The submitting institution retains full ownership of its case materials.

## X. About the Organizers

Organization	Role
ITU	Co-organizer
ITC	Co-organizer
DEC40	Co-organizer
GSLDC	Co-organizer and Host Agency

## XI. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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**ORGANIZERS**

  
ITU

  
International  
Trade  
Centre

  
DEC40  
Global Digital Economy  
Cities Alliance

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Question	Answer
Is there a fee?	No.
Can an organization both apply and nominate others?	Yes.
What if my case lacks quantitative data?	Qualitative evidence is acceptable for initial submission.
Who selects the Lighthouse Cases?	A multi-stakeholder expert panel using the 100-point framework.
Will non-selected cases be published?	No. Only selected cases are published.
Can a consortium apply?	Yes.
Does my case need to be from a city?	No. Urban, rural, regional, and cross-border contexts are all welcome.

## XII. Disclaimer

The applicant shall bear sole responsibility for the originality, authenticity, accuracy, and compliance of its materials. The reports, case books, and related information published under this Program are provided solely for



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The Organizing Committee reserves the right to make necessary adjustments to the Program schedule, venue, agenda, format, or related arrangements due to force majeure, policy or regulatory changes, technical constraints, speaker availability, or other unforeseen circumstances.

Experts participating in the review and evaluation process do so in their personal and independent capacities. Any opinions or evaluation results expressed by such experts constitute their own professional or academic judgments.

## XIII. Contact

**Email:** [Global-Digital-Lighthouse-Case-Collection@ungyldc.org](mailto:Global-Digital-Lighthouse-Case-Collection@ungyldc.org)

Together, we can identify and scale the digital innovations that light the way toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future for all.

*Global Digital Economy Lighthouse Program Organizing Committee*

June 2026

