



Digital Earth
AFRICA

Digital Earth Africa

Partnership Strategy



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Introduction

Digital Earth Africa (DE Africa) will be a complementary infrastructure deployed at the continental scale for Africa to address key national development priorities and align with regional and global frameworks such as Africa 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will also be accessible across sectors, and will enable and drive digital innovation using satellite data.

To achieve the broader vision of DE Africa, the DE Africa program will complement and align with other programs across Africa. Mutually beneficial partnerships are envisaged with a broad range of organisations and programs whose objectives and interests intersect with DE Africa. These partnerships will enable DE Africa to deliver as a program; but they will also expand the scale and scope of DE Africa with increased benefits to Africa. Furthermore, partnerships will ensure that DE Africa delivers a platform that will be sustained in Africa for decades to come.

The Digital Earth Africa Partnership Strategy lays out the high-level approach that will guide DE Africa as it builds partnerships with a range of programs and organisations.

Why partner?

Partnerships are an essential and major element of DE Africa. In broad terms, DE Africa will seek mutually beneficial partnerships to deliver the program, to amplify the benefits, and to ensure sustainability. These themes are expanded below.

Deliver the program, recognising that partnerships are integral to the Program - from effective access to data through to the uptake and use of DE Africa products and services. DE Africa will partner to:

- Establish African-led governance and high level support through members of the DE Africa Governance
- Provide hosting arrangements for the DE Africa capability in Africa
- Provide domain expertise (to champion, lead and use DE Africa services) in relevant thematic areas
- Access the expertise, skills and human resources necessary to build capacity across Africa to build, operate, apply and sustain the DE Africa infrastructure
- Align with related programs, in particular major programs in Earth observation data and applications, for example to develop products and services that have wide endorsement
- Establish relationships with key institutions across Africa, to achieve awareness, engagement and benefits at continental scales and to ensure that 'no-one is left behind'.
- Provide essential technical elements, such as access to the Open Data Cube and to Analysis Ready Data from international satellite observing systems
- Access all sectors, including civil, research and private sector actors and government at country and continental levels

Amplify the Program, Increasing the impact of DE Africa by increasing its scale, scope and reach. DE Africa will seek partnerships that:

- Provide greater and more effective access to, and engagement with, a broader range of stakeholders, including across sectors, thematic applications, and information communities
- Provision of additional channels for outreach and engagement
- Providing opportunities to expand data, computing, or other infrastructure to achieve greater scale and reach

- Connect DE Africa with other platforms to further distribute DE Africa data and services, and add additional functionality and value-added products
- Leverage existing expertise to scale the uptake and use of the DE Africa infrastructure, services and products across sectors

Ensure sustainability, by building among partners the mandates, institutions and routine applications of DE Africa and advocates for its benefits and value as an on-going operational platform. DE Africa will seek partnerships that:

- Increase the technical sustainability of DE Africa, for instance through access to more affordable and accessible infrastructure
- Build high-level political support
- Develop a robust and compelling business case for an ongoing service
- Lead to alignment of programs across institutions to maintain momentum and to deliver on common interests

Our approach to partnerships

We envisage a number of bilateral, 'light touch' partnerships based on a natural alignment of objectives and capabilities, and established according to the needs and interests of both parties. It will therefore be natural for Partners to remain in close contact, to coordinate in areas of shared interest, and to work together at times.

The DE Africa Team will consult with the prospective partner institution to identify mutual areas of collaboration that provide benefit to the DE Africa program and partner institution. This will result in the development of an agreement where both parties outline the collaboration areas, roles and responsibilities, and expected outcomes. Partnerships can be developed across a range of sectors including intergovernmental, private, NGO, academia, research and media. General guidelines to develop these partnerships include:

1. *Alignment.* Each party should define what success looks like according to programmatic alignment with the overall vision and mission of each organisation. Additionally, the partner institution must be aligned with the principles of DE Africa as articulated in its governance framework. A simple approach to this is to identify and document potential areas of cooperation.
2. *Agreements.* The DE Africa team will work with the partner organisation to define the most appropriate agreement or contract needed to secure the partnership. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) template has been defined (see appendix) and is the most likely vehicle for these partnerships that can then link to additional contractual arrangements. The agreement should document the nature of the partnership, collaborative areas of mutual benefit, and any additional rules of engagement, branding, risks, etc. as needed by each organisation.
3. *Planning.* It is important that the partnership be managed appropriately by each organisation and a plan is developed to address the objectives of the partnership. The partnership should be reviewed every 6 months to ensure the strategy and plan remains relevant and each side is gaining benefit from the partnership.
4. *Executive Engagement.* It is important that Leadership within each organisation is aware and onboard with the partnership objectives and provide support as needed.
5. *Communications.* These partnerships are valued and important, and the broader community should know about them. Each organisation will work on a communications plan to announce the partnership as well how communications and joint messaging will take place in the future.

Forming partnerships

Both the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Governing Board can be used to identify and qualify potential partnerships.

The TAC will advise, guide and provide feedback to the DE Africa Program on the potential and planned partnerships and will have broad oversight of the partnerships that DE Africa forms.

The DE Africa Establishment Team will plan, negotiate, form and manage the partnerships, and work with the TAC for any feedback and guidance needed.

The formation of any partnerships that significantly affect the work program, financials or broader strategy of DE Africa should be approved by the TAC.

During the establishment phase of Digital Earth Africa (2019-2021), partnerships with DE Africa will be developed with Geoscience Australia.