

Digital Citizen Summit 2026 is now

Calling for Session Proposals



Principal Partners

About the Summit

The Digital Citizen Summit (DCS) is a flagship annual event organised by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) in partnership with the Centre for Development Policy and Practice (CDPP) and the APNIC Foundation. The Summit brings together civil society, policymakers, researchers, technologists, practitioners, and communities to discuss, deliberate, and co-create ideas around digital rights, internet governance, emerging technologies, and citizen participation in the digital age

The 2026 edition, themed “JanDPI: Centring People in Digital Public Infrastructure,” examines Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) as people’s infrastructure—grounded in equality, dignity, accessibility, participation, and accountability. It calls for moving beyond a technology-first understanding of DPI towards systems that are designed, governed, and delivered around people’s diverse needs and lived realities.

A people-centred DPI approach recognises that meaningful digital inclusion extends beyond connectivity or access to devices. It requires services that are locally relevant, affordable, accessible, and non-exclusionary, supported through shared access points, assisted service models, offline and low-tech alternatives, and interfaces available in regional languages. It also calls for socially inclusive design that responds to the needs of communities that face structural barriers to digital participation.



DCS 2026 will build on critical conversations around digital rights and citizenship, with a particular focus on communities at the margins of digital transformation. It will interrogate how existing forms of social inequality are being reproduced—or newly created—through digital systems, and examine what happens to the rights, autonomy, privacy, and dignity of marginalised groups as essential services increasingly move online.

The Summit will also critically engage with the data dimensions of DPI, including questions of privacy, consent, governance, accountability, surveillance, and the distribution of power embedded within digital infrastructures.

At its core, JanDPI is a call to place people at the centre of digital transformation—ensuring that digital public infrastructure is not merely built for people, but shaped with people and remains accountable to them.

Sub-Themes

This year's Summit will cover (but not be limited to) the following topics:

- **Co-developing Inclusive and Sustainable DPI:**

Developing inclusive DPI frameworks and applicable citizen-centric models. Highlight the limitations and lessons learned from existing DPI applications from the perspectives of inclusivity and sustainability.

- **Understanding Social Exclusion in Digital Public Infrastructure:**

Learning from stories about exclusion in digital public infrastructure and understanding its impacts on citizens, social groups or movements.



- **Governing DPI:**

Understanding the role of different stakeholders, such as government, civil society, and the market, in data governance. Discussing best practices or comparing global frameworks and partnerships, current limitations, and newer avenues in data governance. Discussing the factors that shape DPI standards, specifications and protocols.

- **Data Practices:**

Learning about the different data practices, non-dominant DPI models, privacy, safety, ethics, participatory approaches, and best practices.

- **DPI, Financial Inclusion, and the Future of Digital Finance:**

Interrogating UPI and how it has transformed payments. Moreover, the session can touch upon digital lending, credit scoring and alternative data practices. Opportunities and risks for financially underserved populations can be deliberated upon.

- **DPI and Women's Digital-Economic Empowerment:**

Locating the relation between Women's socio-economic development and DPI. The session can touch upon gender gaps in access, ownership and digital literacy. Moreover, DPI as an enabler of women's entrepreneurship and financial independence can be deliberated upon. Then there are also the risks of women's exclusion through household-level control of digital devices and accounts.



- **Interoperability, Open Standards and Competition:**

Deliberating on why interoperability matters for DPI. The session can touch upon the prevention of vendor lock-in and monopolisation. The role of open-source technologies and public standards can also be explored.

- **DPI, AI and the Next Generation of Digital Infrastructure:**

Understanding how DPI can provide foundations for AI-enabled public services. Then the topic of digital identity and AI governance can be touched upon. It also brings forth the risks of algorithmic discrimination and automated decision-making.

Session Formats

We invite individuals and organisations to submit session proposals in the following formats. Each session will be limited to 45 to 60 minutes. Session partners are expected to propose sessions that bring together multiple stakeholder groups.

Round Table Discussions

Facilitated, small-group dialogues that enable deeper engagement on complex issues, ensuring equal participation and diverse perspectives. A maximum of 4 to 5 people will be allowed to participate.

Panel Discussions

Expert-led discussions on specific sub-themes. Each panel will include a moderator and 3–4 speakers sharing research, insights, or experiences.



Workshops

Hands-on, interactive sessions to ideate, experiment, or co-create around digital governance, technology design, and civic engagement.

Showcases

Dedicated space to exhibit digital tools, open-source projects, or tech-for-good innovations.

Interactive Formats

Games, fishbowls, or other creative interventions exploring digital life and platform accountability.

Who Can Apply?

We welcome proposals from:

- Students & Researchers
- Civil Society members
- Technologists & Developers
- Journalists & Artists
- Public Policy Practitioners
- Designers & Community Organizers
- Academics

*Last date to apply is 20th September

(We will offer limited national travel support for a selected number of participants)

Submit Your Proposal



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