

# Open Source, Open Standards and Reuse

## What is it?

- The Open Source practice of sharing the knowledge behind the design of new software solutions is one of the most significant ICT developments over the last two decades.
- With access to the code underpinning software design, developers can create new and innovative solutions to meet citizens and business requirements, often at no or low cost.
- Using open standards to underpin technology solutions increases the interoperability of systems and can improve delivery of services to the public.
- Reusing existing solutions and designs across government reduces duplication of effort and ensures we are maximising the value for money of assets developed by and for use in the public sector.

## Why?

- Traditionally, the public sector has relied on Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS) software or bespoke global solutions. These proprietary solutions restrict reuse, reduce asset management flexibility and can prevent government organisations from switching suppliers. Government is committed to exploring how open source alternatives can be effectively used, to meet public sector requirements.
- Government is committed to a level playing field for open source software use wherever possible, to prevent supplier lock-in and deliver improved value for money. Proprietary solutions will be fairly assessed against open source alternatives, to ensure the best value for money is achieved.
- With open standards underpinning new solutions, the opportunities to identify and reuse code components are multiplied. This will minimise new procurement requirements, improve service delivery times and significantly reducing costs.
- The specification of reuse in procurement requirements will encourage developers to reconsider proposed terms and conditions. When the public sector is considered as a whole entity, economies of scale will positively impact these costs.
- Wherever possible government will avoid lock-in proprietary software solutions. Greater consideration will be given to exit, re-bid and rebuild costs to ensure contracts offer the best value for money.

## How?

The Government is committed to invigorating the use of open source software and open standards with the public sector. The principle elements of our approach are:

- Exit, rebid and rebuild costs will be taken into consideration during procurement decisions for fair value for money comparisons, between open source and proprietary solutions
- Open standards will underpin all new solutions wherever possible and all documents will use open document formats (such as ODF, PDF and OOXML) wherever practical
- The proposed Applications Store for Government will hold existing open source code and solutions for reuse across the public sector
- By 2011, public bodies will store and share records of approval/use of open source software on the Government Cloud
- By 2015, public bodies will routinely review existing solutions, before opting for procurement
- Clear guidance will ensure that open source and proprietary solutions are considered during procurement, in order to achieve the best value for money.

## **Contact**

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