About OpenDocument Format – An Introduction

The OpenDocument format is an open XML-based document file format for saving and exchanging editable office documents (including memos, reports, and books), spreadsheets, charts, and presentations. OpenDocument was developed as an application-independent file format by a vendor-neutral standards developing organization OASIS, with the participation of multiple office application vendors. On 4 May 2006, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) approved ODF as international standard ISO/IEC 26300.

OpenDocument is owned by OASIS, and is a genuine vendor-neutral, open standard specification free from royalty and restricting encumbrances. All developers are free to work with it. In fact, OpenDocument is the only standard for editable office documents that has been vetted by an independent recognized standards body, has been implemented by multiple vendors, and can be implemented by any supplier (including proprietary software vendors as well as developers using open source software licenses such as the GNU LGPL or GNU GPL).

Using open standards like ODF ensures that the users' information is accessible across platforms and applications, even as technologies change. Organizations and individuals that store their data in an open format avoid being locked in to a single software vendor, leaving them free to switch software if their current vendor goes out of business, raises its prices, changes its software, or changes its licensing terms to something less favorable for the user. Adoption of open standards is particularly important for governmental applications because it can effectively ensure that a government document saved today will not be technologically locked tomorrow.

Support to read and create documents must include people with disabilities. The ODF Alliance supports the work of the OASIS ODF accessibility subcommittee. The Alliance also identifies the requirement that ODF implementations must support the platform(s) accessibility features, and test and identify the assistive technologies that support their claim of accessibility.

Key Benefits of ODF

Access	As a fully open standard, ODF provides governments with enhanced **access** by ensuring that documents are usable in the future by anyone, at any time.
Choice	By providing complete interoperability among office suites, ODF provides governments with greater **choice** due to competition among vendors, including both proprietary and open source applications.
Innovation	By providing the standardized basis for interoperable document formats, ODF promotes **innovation** in the market for office applications.