

ODF Plugfest



cois

community for open interoperability standards

Open Document Format principles for Government Technology

This simple and informative document will help you understand and implement small changes which will have a big impact on the future of Government technology.



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COIS is a division of OpenForum Europe (OFE) which conforms to the OFE Vision, Policies and Code of Conduct with the mission of creating a level playing field for ICT suppliers and freedom of choice for the citizen/user by supporting the drive to adopt Open Standards through the UK public sector. COIS seeks to connect the Public Sector with the technology community, guided by the Cabinet Office's Open Standards Principles. It is committed to transparency, politically and technologically neutral, non profit & self funded with industry support and managed by a co-operation of industry organisations. Views expressed by COIS do not necessarily reflect those held by all its supporters.

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Introduction

Purpose

This document is designed to help you:

- Gain wider freedom of choice of software applications and vendors
- Get greater value from your technology providers and the solutions they offer
- Create a flexible environment for staff and contractor innovation
- Find related case studies, applications, and tools

Implementing flexibility at the fundamental level of document exchange can have a profound impact on Government choice, spending, and efficiency. The following sections outline principles, benefits, options, and recent experience with the Open Document Format, which is the de facto Open Standard¹ for documents that is increasingly being adopted by government organisations.

Executive summary

Open Document Format (ODF) frees documents and data from their applications of origin, enabling them to be exchanged, retrieved, and edited with any Open Document-compliant software, database or tool. This is essential for preserving technology choices in government, and the prevention of isolated "ghettos" of Public Sector resources and infrastructure which are incompatible with each other.

The purpose of this publication is to inform the reader of simple steps that can be made towards format flexibility, as well as to highlight risks of closed and proprietary document formats.

Intended audience

You have received this document because you are an influencer and your role is key. Included with this publication is a simple infographic to help you share the contained message with your colleagues. All toolkit contents use a Creative Commons license to encourage reuse, distribution, and translation. A comparison of ODF-capable applications is included, together with a list of ODF-related tools.

On the back page, highlights of the UK Government Open Standards policy can be found.

¹ <http://www.opendocumentformat.org/features/>

Key Principles

Open Standards are influencing almost every aspect of modern life from communications to industry and education. Many private sector companies have built their success on these principles and a growing number of Public Sector case studies demonstrate efficiency and cost savings that can be achieved²³⁴

Key benefits of ODF

- Guarantees freedom of choice of service provider and precludes vendor lock-in
- Safe-guards the readability of documents in future from discontinued products
- Allows incremental change of systems and technology, avoiding forced upgrades
- Interoperates fluidly with other Open Standards such as PDF and HTML

UK Government leading ODF adoption

In June 2014 ODF was selected as the format for viewing and sharing documents in UK Government. As such, the Government has an opportunity to provide better services by adopting these principals and taking responsibility to train and lead the people within Government to ensure these best practices become the norm.

The UK Government should only purchase fully compliant ODF applications and ODF should be the default option for all UK government applications. This reflects community requirements transparently.

ODF and OOXML

Another popular document format used in government is OOXML. Unlike ODF, OOXML does not meet common requirements of an Open Standard, including those set forth by the UK Government.

Those requirements include that a standard is:

- Controlled by an independent group of experts
- Open to participation from anyone
- Available for everybody to use

OOXML is controlled by a single software company and is not an Open Standard.

ODF vs OOXML file extensions

- Open Document Format documents use file extensions such as .odt .ods .odp .odg
- OOXML documents use file extensions such as .doc .docx .xls .xlsx .ppt .pptx

File extensions may not be visible in file browsers. Editing system settings can reveal them if they are hidden by default.

Application choices

Many capable Open Document editors are available; some at no cost, others with commercial support packages, and still others through proprietary licensing. Several supporting applications are designed to meet the needs of the Public Sector, including very large deployments and multi-year maintenance updates. Support packages are available through the G-Cloud, the Open Source Consortium, and other organisations.

Software	Function	Support	License	ODF 1.2 support
Apache Open Office	Office applications	Community	Open Source	Full
Google Docs	Office applications	Commercial	Proprietary	Partial
LibreOffice	Office applications	Community	Open Source	Full
LibreOffice-from-Collabora	Office applications	Commercial	Proprietary	Full
Microsoft Office 2013/365	Office applications	Commercial	Proprietary	Partial

Variation between applications

Although many existing applications provide the facility to save in ODF, the applications may be limited in their support for certain aspects of the standard.

Example: Vital to workgroup interaction, any Tracked Changes will be lost in the Microsoft Office implementations of ODF. Tracked Changes become ordinary Body Text with no indication that they represent historical edits, or record of who is responsible.

ODF is a comprehensive standard supporting many different features. It's important to choose applications which support the latest version of the document standard (currently ODF 1.2) in order to access newer document features such as comments and change tracking.

UK Government policy mandates the use of ODF version 1.2.

² http://conference.libreoffice.org/talks/2013/content/sessions/034/files/LibOConf2013_Case_Studies_of_migration_to_LibreOffice_in_Japan.pdf

³ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/community/osor/case/libreoffice-municipality-neerijnen>

⁴ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/elibrary/case/limux-it-evolution-open-source-success-story-never>

ODF tools

Tools available to test ODF readiness of applications and ODF standards compliance

- Officeshots – <http://officeshots.org>
Compare presentation of documents in different applications using this web-based service
- WebODF – <http://webodf.org>
Lightweight web-based ODF document editor
- Fix My Documents – <http://fixmydocuments.eu>
Online reporting tool for public sector documents not using ODF
- Pandoc – <http://johnmacfarlane.net/pandoc>
Document conversion software supporting a very large number of formats, including ODF
- odpdown – <http://s.coop/1w2ay>
A converter for plaintext (markdown) to ODP presentations

Contacts

There are many places where you can obtain solutions, advice and support from commercial and non-commercial organisations, from small consultancies to larger implementers, public and private sectors, who make up the Open Document marketplace.

Public Sector

- Cabinet Office – Education, change and support of policy implementation <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-digital-service>
- <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/contact/>

Community

- <http://www.openforumeurope.org/> - advice on standardisation
- <http://www.opensourceconsortium.org/> - implementation, support services & community support
- <http://fixmydocuments.eu/> - report non-standards compliant documents
- <http://www.opendocsociety.org/> - the Open Document community

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Supporters

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Effective cross-device
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Independent document
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Open Source technologists
for the enterprise



Enterprise productivity expertise
in support and consulting



LibreOffice: the best free
office suite ever



Integrating the
Open Enterprise

Innovation Foundry

Helping start-ups
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Promoting the use of
open standards



Scalable & affordable Open
Source solutions



Open Source applications
in healthcare



The UK Industry association
for Open Source SME



Joined-up Open Source
business management software



The world's leading provider
of open source enterprise I.T.



Open Source Drupal content
management systems



Achieving digital inclusion



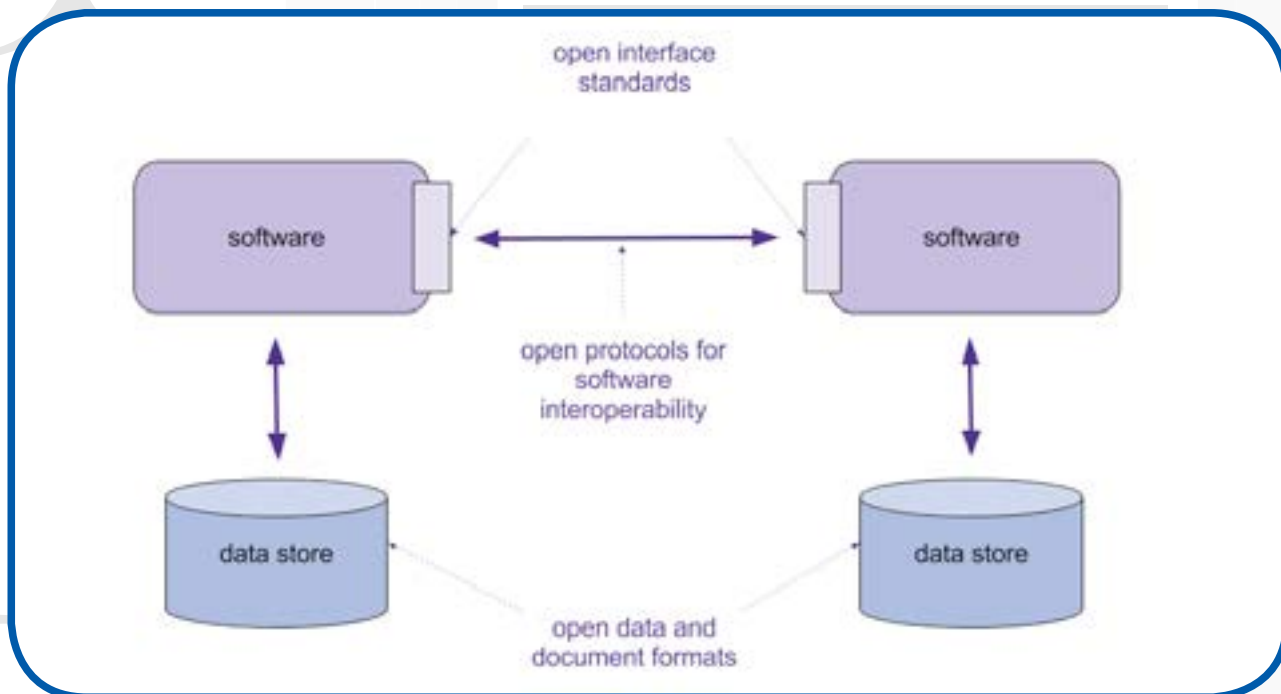
Delivering secure collaboration
through interoperability

Government policy extract & highlights

“This policy becomes active on 1 November 2012. From this date government bodies (central government departments, their agencies, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) and any other bodies for which they are responsible) must adhere to the Open Standards Principles - for software interoperability, data and document formats in government IT specifications.”

“The Open Standards Principles provide a foundation on which to select and implement open standards to support open data, the IT and digital strategies.”

Figure 1 - Diagram illustrating the technical scope of the Open Standards Principles for software interoperability, data and document formats.



“These standards enable software to interoperate through open protocols and allow the exchange of data between data stores and software through open data and document formats. Standards for internal processing within hardware (including telecommunications hardware), which are not relevant to external interfaces, are out of scope.

This policy describes principles for the selection and specification of open standards which can be implemented in both open source and proprietary software. For information on the government’s open source policy see the Cabinet Office Open Source Procurement Toolkit.”

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-standards-principles/open-standards-principles>