Avoiding the Pitfalls of eGovernment

- 10 lessons learnt from eGovernment deployments

OASIS (Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards) [Ref 1] is a not-for-profit, international consortium that drives the development, convergence, and adoption of e-business standards. Members themselves set the OASIS technical agenda, using a lightweight, open process expressly designed to promote industry consensus and unite disparate efforts. The consortium produces open standards for Web services, security, e-business, and standardization efforts in the public sector and for application-specific markets. OASIS was founded in 1993.

The OASIS eGovernment Member Section (eGov MS) [Ref 2] serves as a focal point for discussions of governmental and public administration requirements for e-business standardization. Bringing together representatives from global, regional, national and local government agencies, the eGov MS provides a platform for those who share a common interest in directing and understanding the impact of open standards on the public sector.

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Overview

This paper draws on the experiences and lessons learnt of several early adopters of eGovernment Programmes, and provides guidance on the top 10 pitfalls that can lead to the failure of such a Programme. That failure can be measured as over budget, over time, lack of take-up, lack of a single consistent transparent approach or whatever. However the failure is measured it essentially means that during any Post-Implementation Review the whole Business Case for the Programme will be judged as not being realised.

The paper provides a focus on pitfalls caused by things that have gone wrong, things that were not envisaged and highlights things that would be done differently and better next time round.
In addition for each of the pitfalls there is a discussion on the risks raised and possible mitigations, and finally recommendations of how to avoid the pitfalls.

The editors of this paper are John Borras and Colin Wallis from the OASIS eGov Member Section Steering Committee.

The intended audience is:
- Government and other public sector officials responsible for eGovernment policy, strategy, and implementation.
- Other public or global Institutions that provide advice and guidance on implementing eGovernment Progammes.
- Providers of software and services to Governments.
- OASIS membership.

Introduction

The concept of eGovernment has been around for a decade or more and many Governments are now deeply involved in delivering implementation plans, some for a second time having found the need to re-visit some of their earlier attempts. It is therefore an opportune time to undertake a type of Post Implementation Review of all these initiatives and to capture a set of lessons learnt to date with the benefit of helping to avoid the pitfalls in future eGovernment Programmes.

The pitfalls itemized in this paper reflect the reality experienced by many Governments in their attempts to deliver eGovernment Programmes.   But an increasing number are now getting to grips with the much broader and complex set of cultural and organisational changes which are needed for ICT to deliver significant benefits to the public sector. This new approach is generally referred to as Transformational Government. It encompasses a new "virtual" business layer within government which allows an integrated, government-wide, citizen-focused service to be presented to citizens across all channels, but at no extra cost and without having to restructure government to do so. Two very good examples of this new approach are South Australia's "Just Ask Once" portal[1] and the UK Government's DirectGov portal[2], and the approach is explained in very good detail in the CS Transform's white paper entitled Citizen Service Transformation – a manifesto for change in the delivery of public services[3].

The change of emphasis from eGovernment to Transformational Government can be regarded as evolutionary; the former being but one element of the latter. In this paper we focus just on the eGovernment aspects and we will be producing a further paper covering the wider Transformational Government aspects in the future. To realise the maximum benefits from ICT introducing a full Transformational Government Programme would be advisable, but that is a huge undertaking and there are real benefits that can be achieved at the eGovernment level following the guidance in this document. In producing this document, the editors have drawn on their own experiences as well as those of the members of the OASIS eGov Member Section plus researching the experiences of other governments and jurisdictions. The views expressed and recommendations made are not those any particular individual or government body, they are an agreed consensus of views made by the Member Section.

It is not the intention of this paper to provide a full "How to do" guide to delivering successful eGovernment Progammes, but to focus on those aspects where difficulties have occurred in the past and which with the benefit of experience and hindsight could be done more successfully in the future. If further guidance or help is required on any aspect addressed in this paper, or any other aspect of an eGovernment Programme, please contact the eGov MS Steering Committee using the Contact facility at www.oasis-egov.org/contact .

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[1] www.cio.sa.gov.au/eGovernment/eGovernment/index_html
[2] www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm
[3] www.cstransform.com/white_papers/CitizenServiceTransformationV1.pdf

Lesson 1 – Single cross-government vision

Pitfall: Lack of a common understanding and appreciation across all parts of government of the eGovernment vision.

Cause(s):

- Lack of a single vision
- No transparency of the vision
- Departmental and silo-based views
- Lack of a private sector ethos
- Limited or no understanding of how all the eGovernment policies, strategies, frameworks, etc are tied to the vision.

Outcomes:

Mis-understanding; inter-agency conflict; people pulling in different directions; staff dis-content, poor service delivery; unnecessary costs; customer dissatisfaction.

Discussion

What is an eGovernment Vision?   One very good definition is "that it should be a clear description of the desired future state for more effective and efficient service delivery, which is endorsed at the highest political and administrative levels of the government".[4]   There is no prescribed way for how that description should be set out and communicated; it will depend on local circumstances and culture. But irrespective of which method and channels are used, the essential requirement is to ensure that it is comprehensive, freely available and readily understood by all.

The Vision needs to set out in particular the transformation and mindset changes required in the culture and behaviour of employees' and how they will be achieved. A much more commercial business approach is required, e.g. knowing what customers want, knowing precisely what the cost investment and the revenue benefits are, measuring everything.

Some other features that should be articulated in the Vision are:

- What consistency of delivery means and how it will be achieved regardless of the channel used. So for example a person using the web for self service is essentially the same as the person coming to the counter and have the staff member access the service on their behalf just with different authentication and access controls.
- How sharing and combining resources, for example by using a technical capability exchange website where each agency puts up its spare technical capability for 'hire', will benefit the whole Programme.
- How all stakeholders, both internal and external, will be involved in the definition and delivery of services.
- What 'common' or 'shared' services look like and how they will be introduced.
- How all the various policies, strategies, frameworks, etc link together and support the Vision.

Recommendation:

There must be a joined up single vision across all of government and that vision has to be fully transparent and understood at all levels, and properly communicated.

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[4] www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/cio/transformational_government/strategy.aspx

Lesson 2 – Governance

Pitfall: Lack of top-level ownership and effective cross-government decision-making.

Cause(s):

- No appreciation of the need for a top-level governance model
- Inadequate processes and procedures to manage and direct the Programme
- Full delegation of responsibilities to second and third level managers

Outcomes:

No cross-government co-ordination; difficult decisions do not get made; ineffective change management; inter-agency conflict; managers having different priorities; unnecessary costs, failure to realise benefits.

Discussion

This is a very big issue for eGovernment Programmes and failure to understand the need for and to implement top-level ownership and control can lead to the failure of the whole Programme. The principles and rationale for a proper governance model are articulated very well in the draft of the European Interoperability Framework v2[5].

The governance needs to be multi-dimensional covering all aspects at Strategy, Policy, Programme Management, Financial, Technical and Operational levels. The financial level is particularly important. It should include managing the budgeting processes since most governments are not conducive to funding this type of work and new ways need to be found to fund this activity, see Lesson 5 below. Also there needs to be very close control over the realization of benefits. If this aspect is not managed and controlled then costs could spiral, delays could occur and the whole eGovernment Business Case jeopardized.

Recommendations:

The whole Programme must have total buy-in from the top so that the difficult decisions get made and get implemented.

Put in place administrative systems that will turn the top-level ownership into effective cross-government decision-making and implementation, benefits realization and subsequent change management.

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[5] http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/servlets/Doc?id=31597

Lesson 3 - Driving Change

Pitfall: Failure to drive through on the implementation of the changes necessary to deliver the eGovernment Programme.

Cause(s):

- Management is re-active not pro-active
- Lack of engagement and involvement of all stakeholders
- Policies, strategies, frameworks etc are not maintained and regularly refreshed

Outcomes:

No culture change; over-runs; unnecessary costs; supplier dissatisfaction; documentation becomes shelf-ware.

Discussion

Having put in place the necessary cross-government Vision and necessary Governance arrangements mentioned above, it is then vital to ensure that all the changes in procedures, culture, behaviours, service delivery etc are driven through and implemented. This requires action at a number of levels including:

- creating a culture of openness - open behaviour, open debate, shared responsibility
- identifying and engaging with all key stakeholders, both internal and external
- prioritisation (see Lesson 7) – look for easy, quick wins
- adopting Open Standards, see Appendix A for more details
- using the Procurement processes to evaluate the cost benefits of Open Source - see Lesson 6
- ensuring all documentation is kept up to date
- continually measuring the rate and extent of change on a variety of axis and from multiple foci - citizens, cost reduction, productivity, etc.

Recommendations:

Ensure all management is pro-active and drives through on all aspects of change.

Ensure regular engagement and involvement of all stakeholders.

Identify tightly scoped projects that can deliver quick wins and set up these up with the right behaviours to be used as a model for others.

Lesson 4 – Legal Powers and Barriers

Pitfall: Inter-agency collaboration, data and information exchanges and other joint activities are prohibited.

Cause(s):

- Existing legal powers and practices are not conducive to joined-up, online service delivery
- Data sharing between agencies and between business processes is prohibited

Outcomes:

Cannot provide optimum service delivery; additional work for inter-agency collaboration; higher service delivery costs; customer dissatisfaction.

Discussion

Very often existing laws and practices prohibit full inter-agency working, for example by limiting an agency to only working for tightly prescribed purposes, or by prohibiting the exchange of data between agencies of processes. This can result in the customer having to provide data more than once to complete a single online transaction or in fact having to make two transactions where one would be the ideal situation.

Data protection legislation often means that data cannot be shared even if consent is given by the user.

Current practices invariably prohibit the use by employees of the new Web 2.0 technologies, e.g. use of community websites, disallowing them to blog on government business, all of which can means that the benefits of the new ICT technologies are not being used to their full effect. There is also the emerging question of sovereignty raised through the introduction of Cloud Computing. Many Governments do not allow their data to go or be stored outside of their territory but by using public Cloud Computing facilities it is not possible to impose that restriction. One solution could be to set up a private Government Cloud but that would mean increased investment which would severely impact the whole eGovernment Business Case.

Early identification of these legal barriers and remedial action can save a lot of down-stream problems thus ensuring that optimal services can be delivered. It should be recognized of course that changing legislation can be a lengthy and time-consuming process so the sooner steps are taken to overcome these barriers the less impact they will have on the success of the eGovernment Programme.

Recommendations:

Ensure proper Legal Powers are in place to support the whole Programme.

Remove/overcome any barriers particularly on data sharing and security.

Lesson 5 – Funding

Pitfall: Failure of traditional "silo-based" budgetary mechanisms to support the delivery of the eGovernment Programme.

Cause(s):

- No new funding model introduced to support the Programme
- Existing budgetary mechanisms prohibit joint agency funding of projects
- Cross-government projects do not produce viable business cases
- Departmental and silo-based views

Outcomes:

Failure to implement cross-government projects; inter-agency conflict; poor service delivery; unnecessary costs.

Discussion

The introduction of eGovernment Programmes require new thinking on the funding models required to support them. There has to be a break from traditional departmental funding models, they don't work for eGov. There is a need to move to, ideally, a central funding model and budgetary process that is tailor-made to meet the needs the Programme. Alternatively there can be a mix of funding models but definitely there has to be co-ordination and linking into a central view.

There are various ways in which this central model can be implemented, for example:
- central government innovation funding,
- top slicing, donation funding,
- enforced or consensual club funding
- cost recovery from end user charging,
- Private Public Partnerships.

The Investment Management Standard[6] designed by the Department of Treasury and Finance, State Government of Victoria, [Ref 7] is a good guide to the development of a business case for a common solution.

There is a need to look for a mix of big and small projects. Small, quick win projects can often realise savings to help fund larger projects that are vital yet don't offer up a tangible saving (not at least in the short/medium term).

This aspect is closely linked with Procurement – see Lesson 6.

Recommendations:

A new approach needs to be taken in the funding of Programmes, one that replaces the traditional "silo-based" budgetary mechanisms.

Develop a mix of big and small projects, the latter being used as quick wins to help fund the former.

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[6] www.dtf.vic.gov.au/CA25713E0002EF43/pages/investment-management

Lesson 6 – Procurement

Pitfall: Failure to achieve optimum contracts and best value for money for the delivery of eGovernment services.

Cause(s):

- lack of experience necessary by those involved in the procurement process
- lack of clarity in Requests for Invitation (RFI) to tender
- lack of cross-government contracts
- failure to keep up to date with developments in the market place.

Outcomes:

Lengthy procurement exercises; supplier conflict; unnecessary costs; delays, inadequate solutions, re-work.

Discussion

A critical focus of attention required by an eGovernment Programme is on the procurement process and ensuring that best value for money is obtained in all contracts. A common weakness is the lack of taking a full life-cycle view of the programme and its individual projects. For example the introduction of an Open Source solution can involve considerable re-training both of the implementers and systems support staff as well as the end-users, and very often this cost has not been properly recognised and reflected in the business case.

The items listed below are the key procurement elements that need to be addressed when putting together a procurement plan for the Programme:

- Increase the capability within Government: raise the level of awareness, skills and confidence in the professions in the different licensing, support, commercial and cost models.
- Cross-government Framework contracts: look to introduce framework contracts that can be used across government and from which call-off contracts can be delivered quickly, thus not delaying projects.
- Improve the clarity in procurement: develop clear and open guidance for ensuring that Open Source and proprietary products are considered equally and systematically for the purpose of achieving value for money. The aim should be to try to get Open Source and proprietary products on a level playing field in terms of conformance, support, development etc.
- Look for maturity and sustainability of products and services: given the nature of government work, a degree of confidence that a product is mature, that the software code base is secure, and that the project itself is sustainable is needed.
- Open Standards: specify requirements by reference to open standards and require compliance with open standards – see Appendix A for more guidance on Open Standards.
- International examples and policies: keep up to date with developments; actively seek examples from other countries and sectors to encourage the development of product knowledge and better challenge to suppliers.

Recommendation:

Review all current government procurement processes and optimise them to support the eGovernment Programme.

Lesson 7 – Prioritisation

Pitfall: Implementation problems caused by attempts to deliver too many services too quickly.

Cause(s):

- Over-ambitious implementation plans
- Failure to identify key services
- Lack of understanding of which are the most cost-beneficial services
- Attempt to do everything all at once
- Insufficient skills and resources to implement the delivery plan
- Requirements scope creep

Outcomes:

Projects' conflicts; unnecessary costs; delays, missed targets, re-work, staff dis-content, inadequate solutions.

Discussion

The delivery of an eGovernment Programme is a huge undertaking and invariably it seriously stretches the resources and capabilities of Governments. Much of this is because of the desire to do too much too quickly. It is essential to identify the key services that are the most important and most cost-beneficial services to start with, and to ensure that the Programme roadmap sets out a pragmatic and phased approach to delivery. The simple message is don't try and do everything all at once.

Common or shared services tend to provide the biggest return on investment but also tend to be the biggest projects and hence the most resource intensive. So a mix with smaller easy, quick win projects that will provide savings to counter balance the resourcing and funding of the bigger projects with longer lead times is advisable.

There is also the need to manage changing priorities caused by either experiences learnt from user take-up, a changing economic environment, a change in the political agenda or change of Government.

As part of any prioritisation exercise avoid re-inventing wheels. There are a lot of well-established, mature off-the-shelf products and services available. Make use of them and the experience of those that have already implemented them. Be prepared to accept an 80/20 solution which can be delivered quickly, and if necessary, replaced at a later date with an enhanced version, rather than take extra time over detailed tailoring.

Recommendations:

Recognise and understand the size of the task at hand, the depth of skills and resources available to deliver projects, and then develop a Key Services Catalogue that records the prioritization of projects.

Develop a mix of big and small projects, the latter being used as quick wins to help build momentum for the whole Programme.

Lesson 8 – User Take-up

Pitfall: Lack of take-up by users of the eGovernment online services.

Cause(s):

- Government rather than user-focussed design of services
- Services not joined-up across government
- Services are too complex
- Channel specific, i.e. not available across all channels
- Lack of key measurements' to evidence success

Outcomes:

Poor take-up; customer dissatisfaction; re-work; extra costs; digital exclusion; unrealised benefits.

Discussion

The key to success of any eGovernment Programme is the actual usage by citizens and businesses of the online services. Achieving the required take-up easily should not be taken for granted. Early adopters of eGovernment Programmes have learnt the hard way by experience that users don't always want what the Government offers in the way it is offered to them. It is therefore important to involve end-users in any service design and take-up policy, and then monitor and manage very early on any lack of take-up.

Producing an e-Service Take-up Strategy is a good place to start. This strategy should cover service design, measurement criteria, marketing, incentives, compulsion and other techniques, including best practice guidance to individual agencies on how to develop effective take-up strategies for individual services.

A very important component is digital inclusion and again it is good practice to produce a strategy for ensuring that all users can enjoy the benefits of the online services through a choice of digital channels. Typically developed in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors, such a strategy should set out the government's approach to addressing the key access, confidence and motivation barriers to digital engagement[7].

Another good approach is to introduce the "franchise model" concept. Initially developed by the UK Government to support its www.direct.gov.uk portal, this model puts into place a number of agile cross-government virtual "franchise businesses" based around customer segments to deliver more customer centric services[8].

Recommendation:

Significant effort needs to be put into the strategy, design and implementation of online services to ensure they meet the users' needs and hence achieve the take-up that is envisaged.

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[7] See the EU's strategy (http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/policy/index_en.htm) and the UK's strategy (www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/broadcasting/6216.aspx).

[8] www.cstransform.com/track_record/product/one-stop_multi-channel_government.htm

Lesson 9 – Achieving Interoperability

Pitfall: Lack of effective interoperability of processes and/or systems across Government.

Cause(s):

- Interoperability issues at legal, business and operational levels not addressed
- Technical interoperability given centre stage
- Lack of use of open standards
- Lack of conformance testing programmes

Outcomes:

Ineffective joining-up across government; lack of genuine business transformation; unnecessary costs; re-work; poor service delivery.

Discussion

Achieving effective delivery of online services usually requires Governments to invest in major transformation of its processes and systems. This doesn't necessarily mean that a full Business Process Re-engineering effort needs to be undertaken but often it doesn't fall far short of that. Without this transformation the ways and means of processes talking to one another, of data being shared between systems and hence users having to engage with a only single online service, will not be achieved. This all makes interoperability a key target of the delivery programme.

Whilst most governments have introduced eGovernment Interoperability Frameworks (eGIFs) as part of their eGovernment Programmes, these eGIFs generally only focus on the technical layer of service delivery. More focus needs to be given to the higher layers, eg business, legal and operational, and this aspect is discussed very well in the "Beyond Interoperability: A new Policy Framework for e-Government" white paper[9].

A very important element in achieving interoperability is the use of Open Standards and this aspect is discussed in more detail at Appendix A.

Having adopted a policy of using Open Standards, it is important to put in place a series of conformance programmes that can be used to evaluate vendors' products to ensure that they do provide the required interoperability.

Recommendation:

Interoperability at all layers has to be defined and achieved to ensure effective and optimal online service delivery.

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[9] www.cstransform.com/white_papers/BeyondInteropV1.0.pdf

Lesson 10 – Skills

Pitfall: Lack of required skills at all levels to implement the eGovernment Programme.

Cause(s):

- Underestimating complexity of online service delivery
- Underestimating breadth of skills required
- Cost cutting exercises causing skills shortages
- Failure to put in place training programmes early enough
- No long-term skills development strategy

Outcomes:

Delays; competing demands; increased use of consultants; less than optimal services.

Discussion

The implementation of eGovernment Progammes will take most Governments into new territory and it is unlikely that they will have all the skills necessary for this in-house. There is a need for the right skills at all levels and in all disciplines. This is not just an issue at the technical level; it applies across the board at the strategic, management, operational, project management and procurement levels. Lesson 6 – Procurement above highlights a very good example of this need.

The impact of this skills shortage on the whole Programme should not be under-estimated. It is advisable to plan to buy-in or loan the expertise in the short term, and in parallel build a longer term strategy to develop in-house capabilities. Other good practices include:

- Consider loaning skills from other governments who have already implemented their programmes and have learnt the lessons.
- Look for opportunities to use other eGov platforms to pilot services.
- Ensure there is proper skills transfer when consultants have to be brought in.

There are a number of recognised competency and skills frameworks for developing in-house skills. One such is that in use in the UK[10] , albeit this is focussed very much on the ICT profession but the general principles of it can be applied to other sectors as well. It is advisable to build a longer term skills development strategy on one of these frameworks.

Recommendation:

Do not under-estimate the need for skills in all disciplines when introducing an eGovernment Programme and decide how to fill the gaps very early on in the implementation plan.

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[10] www.civilservice.gov.uk/my-civil-service/networks/professional/it/framework.aspx

Summary

eGovernment Programmes can take a long time to realise the benefits envisaged in the Business Case. There will be some quick wins that can be made but it is important to recognise up front that many aspects take a long time to implement and then require considerable maintenance and continuous enhancement. Progress can be hampered by a lack of proper governance, inadequate funding models, skills shortages, poor online service design and a lack of user take-up. All of these aspects need careful attention at the outset and may need to be re-visited many times during the Programme. It is therefore essential to:

- manage expectations about short-term success;
- be prepared for continual evolution;
- be prepared to commit for the long term.

This paper has high-lighted the most common causes of failure but they are not the only ones. Other pitfalls will emerge but they are more likely to be related to local circumstances and will need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Avoiding these top 10 pitfalls will go a long way towards success and the realisation of the benefits set out in the eGovernment Programme Business Case.

Contacts and Additional Information

This Document and other documents can be obtained through the OASIS website [Ref 1].

For more information on how to participate in eGov Member Section activities, please contact the eGov Member Section [Ref 2]

Appendix A – Open Standards

There is little disagreement within the various stakeholder communities about the need to use Open Standards to underpin the delivery of eGovernment online services. The importance being based on two aspects; first their use helps to ensure interoperability and second their use invariably produces the best value for money. And whilst the focus of Open Standards is predominately always on technical standards, the principles should not be confined to just that layer. There are standards that are appropriate to other layers of the eGovernment Programme, e.g. requirements definition and modelling, security, project management, and it is advisable to extend the use of Openness to encompass those areas as well.

NB. For the purposes of this discussion the term 'standard' is used in its broadest sense, i.e. it includes all specifications that have gone through a standardization process, whilst recognizing that specifications[11] and standards[12] are not technically the same thing.

The difficulty comes however with reaching agreement on the precise definition of what constitutes an Open Standard. The various stakeholder communities have definitions that differ either on points of detail or on more fundamental concepts. Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_standard) provides a good synopsis of the debate and provides pointers to a number of the major stakeholders' definitions.

What is important is to recognize what the essential aspects of Openness are that will provide the maximum benefit for eGovernment Programmes, and these may be slightly different to other business domains. The following are examples of definitions often quoted within the eGovernment world:

- European Interoperability Framework v2 Draft - EIFv2
  (http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/7728)

  In order to establish a baseline, the following are the four minimal characteristics that a specification and its attendant documents must have in order to be considered an open standard:
  1) The open standard is adopted and will be maintained by a not-for-profit organisation, and its ongoing development occurs on the basis of an open decision-making procedure available to all interested parties (consensus or majority decision etc.).
  2) The open standard has been published and the standard specification document is available either freely or at a nominal charge. It must be permissible to all to copy, distribute and use it for no fee or at a nominal fee.
  3) The intellectual property - i.e. patents possibly present - of (parts of) the open standard is made irrevocably available on a royalty free basis.
  4) There are no constraints on the re-use of the standard.

- New Zealand eGovernment Interoperability Framework (eGIF)
  (www.e.govt.nz/standards/e-gif)

  To guide readers in this respect, the e-GIF endorses "open standards" that exhibit the following properties:
  • Be accessible to everyone free of charge: no discrimination between users, and no payment or other considerations should be required as a condition to use the standard;
  • Remain accessible to everyone free of charge: owners should renounce their options, if any, to limit access to the standard at a later date;
  • Be documented in all its details: all aspects of the standard should be transparent and documented, and both access to and use of the documentation should be free.

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[11] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Specification_(technical_standard)
[12] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standards

- UK eGovernment Interoperability Framework (eGIF)
  (www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/govtalk/policydocuments/e-gif.aspx)

  Requires standards that have:
  • market support – the specifications selected are widely supported by the market, and are likely to reduce the cost and risk of government information systems;
  • scalability – specifications selected have the capacity to be scaled to satisfy changed demands made on the system, such as changes in data volumes, number of transactions or number of users;
  • openness – the specifications are documented and available to the public.

- Liberty (http://www.projectliberty.org/liberty/about/open_standards_commitment/)

  Considers a standard to be open when it complies with all these elements:

  • cannot be controlled by any single person or entity with any vested interests;
  • evolved and managed in a transparent process open to all interested parties;
  • platform independent, vendor neutral and usable for multiple implementations;
  • openly published (including availability of specifications and supporting material);
  • available royalty free or at minimal cost, with other restrictions (such as field of use and defensive suspension) offered on reasonable and non-discriminatory terms;
  • approved through due process by rough consensus among participants.

It is important not to confuse the debate about Open Standards with that about Open Source. The latter is discussed in detail in a separate paper by the OASIS eGov Member Section entitled "Free, Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS) - Use by Governments". That paper highlights the UK's Open Source Policy[13] which is a good reference on how the use of "Openness" can benefit both aspects and how to develop policies to move to the next step beyond just saying 'open is a good idea'.

Recommendation:

Trying to distil a common definition from all of these variations is not easy but the OASIS eGovernment Member Section would recommend the following criteria are the minimum ones that should be looked for when deciding whether or not a standard meets the required state of Openness for use in their service delivery plans.

Open Standards should:
- have been developed through an open decision-making process;
- be mature, ie have been in use for some time and therefore are tried and tested;
- be global in nature and not parochial to any specific country or region;
- be openly published, either with no royalties and other restrictions on reuse, or with any such restrictions offered on reasonable and non-discriminatory terms;
- be well supported in the market place, ie it should have gained acceptance in the marketplace by a choice of suppliers whose products support the standard.

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[13] www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/318020/open_source.pdf

Appendix B – References

The following references are either used directly in this paper or the material within them has been used to help formulate the advice and recommendations.

1. OASIS

   see www.oasis-open.org

2. eGov Member Section

   see www.oasis-egov.org

3. UK Business Case guidance

   see www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/6055977

4. NZ Business Case guidance

   see www.e.govt.nz/policy/governance/business-case-07/chapter1.html

5. Australia Business Case guidance

   see www.egov.vic.gov.au/topics-a-z/b/business-case-guidelines-topics-a-z.html

6. CS Transform "Beyond Interoperability" White Paper

   see www.cstransform.com/white_papers/BeyondInteropV1.0.pdf

7. CS Transform "Citizen Service Transformation – a manifesto for change in the delivery of public services" White Paper

   see www.cstransform.com/white_papers/CitizenServiceTransformationV1.pdf

8. Department of Treasury and Finance, State Government of Victoria Investment Management Standard

   see www.dtf.vic.gov.au/CA25713E0002EF43/pages/investment-management

9. Government of South Australia "Just Ask Once" portal

   see www.cio.sa.gov.au/eGovernment/eGovernment/index_html

10. UK Government DirectGov portal

    see www.directgov.gov.uk

11. UK Government's Open Source Policy

    see www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/318020/open_source.pdf