

ODF|Plugfest



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cois

community for open interoperability standards

#ODFPlugfest

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 various European public sector organisations. COIS seeks to connect the Public Sector with the technology community, guided by the UK 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:

- Inform about the wide freedom of choice of software applications and vendors
- Increase value from your technology providers and the solutions they offer
- Facilitate a flexible environment for staff and contractor innovation
- Help find related case studies, applications, and tools
- Highlight risks regarding closed and proprietary formats

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 (ODF)¹: the de facto Open Standard for documents, which is increasingly being adopted by government organisations.

Executive summary

The ODF frees documents and data from their applications of origin, enabling them to be exchanged, retrieved, and edited with any ODF-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.

Intended audience

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 Dutch Government Open Standards policy can be found.

Open Document Format file types

Format	Use
.odt .fodt .ott .odm	ODF word processing (text)
ods .fods .ots	ODF Spreadsheet
.odg .fodg .otg	ODF Drawing / graphic
.odp .fodp .otp	ODF Presentation
.odf	ODF Formulae & mathematical equations
.odb	ODF Database

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 achieved^{2 3 4}.

As Open Standards are managed as collaboration between industry organisations, it is committed to transparency in a politically neutral, non profit manner. COIS itself is also managed through the co-operation of supporting industry organisations.

Key benefits of ODF

By design, the Open Document Format is available for anyone to use and this right cannot be revoked. This enables developers to transition between other Open Standards such as PDF and HTML. ODF:

- Guarantees freedom of choice regarding service provider and precludes vendor lock-in
- Safeguards the readability of documents in future from discontinued products
- Allows incremental change of systems and technology, thereby avoiding forced upgrades

Netherlands Government leading ODF adoption

In June 2012, ODF 1.2 was published on the Comply or Explain list of Open Standards by the NL government as the format to exchange documents that can be adapted. The Dutch government highlights the importance of open communication to its citizens. They may expect an ODF format in communication with the government. Also by this publication a plan will be stimulated how to further adopt ODF as a standard to ensure ODF becomes the norm for exchanging documents.

The NL Government should only purchase fully compliant ODF applications, and ODF should be the default option for all NL government applications that exchange documents. Before ODF 1.2, ODF 1.0 was already on the Comply or Explain list which has resulted in several best practices for collaboration and in a roll out of LibreOffice on all Dutch central government computers.

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 Dutch 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

ODF vs OOXML file extensions

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

File extensions may not be visible in file browsers, so it may be necessary to alter your system settings to reveal the file formats in use if they are hidden by default.

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>

Application choices

Many capable Open Document editors are available: some at no cost, others with commercial support packages, and further options with proprietary licensing. Several packages are designed to meet the needs of the Public Sector, including very large deployments and multi-year maintenance updates.

Software	License	Formats	Platforms	Support	Link
Abiword ⁵	Open Source	odt	Linux, Windows	Community	http://www.abiword.org/
Apache OpenOffice ⁶	Open Source	All	Linux , Windows, OS X	Community	https://www.openoffice.org/
Calligra (KDE) ⁷	Open Source	All	Linux, Windows, OSX, Android	Community	https://www.calligra.org/
EuroOffice	Open Source	All	Windows, Linux, Android	Commercial	http://www.multiracio.com/
EuroOffice Professional	Proprietary	All	Windows, Linux	Commercial	http://www.multiracio.com/
Google Docs ⁸	Proprietary	odt ods odp	Cloud	Commercial	http://www.google.com/docs/about/
LibreOffice	Open Source	All	Linux, Windows, OSX, Android	Community	https://www.libreoffice.org/
LibreOffice powered by CIB	Proprietary	All	Linux, Windows	Commercial	http://libreoffice.cib.de/
LibreOffice-from-Collabora	Open Source	All	Linux, Windows, OSX, Android	Commercial	https://libreoffice-from-collabora.com/
Microsoft Office 2013	Proprietary	odt ods odp	Windows, OSX, Android, iOS	Commercial	https://products.office.com/
Microsoft Office 365	Proprietary	odt ods odp	Cloud	Commercial	https://products.office.com/
OnlyOffice Enterprise ⁹	Proprietary	odt ods odp	Cloud	Commercial	http://www.onlyoffice.com/enterprise-edition.aspx
OnlyOffice Free ⁹	Open Source	odt ods odp	Linux, Windows	Community	http://www.onlyoffice.com/
OpenXchange	Open Source & CC BY-SA-NA	odt ods odp	Linux, Cloud	Commercial Community	https://www.open-xchange.com/

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.

ODF is a comprehensive standard supporting many different features, therefore 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.

Due to this, the NL Government policy mandates the use of ODF version 1.2.

5 Partial ODF support with import and export filters

6 The default and recommended outputs are Extended ODF 1.2 documents. Third-party ports to Android, FreeBSD, OS/2 available

7 While there are binaries for Windows, OSX & Android, platforms, they are currently not officially supported and not recreated for every release. It is planned change that with the upcoming 3.0 release end of 2015

8 Supports ODF 1.1 and is working towards ODF 1.2.

9 Partial support for ODF save/download

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 library in Javascript
- 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 markdown to ODP presentations
- Java ODF library – <http://incubator.apache.org/odftoolkit>
Initiated by Sun and IBM and before being donated to Apache
- ODF validator – <http://odf-validator.rhcloud.com>
A service to check for conformance of ODF documents based on their OpenDocument Format specification

Contacts

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

Public Sector

- NL Comply or Explain list publication: <https://www.forumstandaardisatie.nl/>
- NL format and policy contacts: <http://www.digicommissaris.nl/>
- NL Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations: <https://www.logius.nl/>
- UK Cabinet Office – Education, change and support of policy implementation <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-digital-service>
- UK Government Digital Service - <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/contact/>

Community

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

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Supporters

We thank the following organisations for their support of the 11th Plugfest and the creation of this document with the accompanying infographic.



Effective cross-device
Open Source collaboration



The Free and Open
Productivity Suite



Independent document
management experts



community for open interoperability standards

Supporting a level playing
field, giving freedom of choice



Enterprise productivity expertise
in support and consulting



COLLABORATE IN CONFIDENCE

Powerful collaboration
and communication suite



Logius
Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations

Logius; the digital
government service of NL



Supporting Freedom -
Customisation -
Interoperability - Extensibility



Promoting the use of
open standards



Open Source applications
in healthcare



Improving office
productivity by insight



Joined-up Open Source
business management software



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



The makers' choice for
sysadmins, developers
and desktop users



The home of LibreOffice

Government policy extract & highlights

The NL policy on ODF dates back to 2007; it is part of the Comply or Explain policy of 2006. The Standardisation Board and Standardisation Forum were established by decree by the Minister of Economic Affairs on 27 March 2006.

The Standardisation Forum supports the Dutch government in the use, development and establishment of open standards for electronic exchange. In this way it promotes interoperability, not only within the Dutch government system itself, but also in the relations between government agencies with both citizens and companies.

For implementation of ODF we advise the usage shown in the figure underneath.

Open formats, what for?

▶ So that users might read my documents unhindered

Users exchanging reports.



CLOSED FORMAT, IDENTICAL SOFTWARE

Alice uses the software program "Carcera⁽¹⁾." She records her report in a closed format (one that does not permit interoperability), then sends it to Bob, who has the same software program. He can read the document, modify it and send it back to Alice.



PROGRAMS WITH CLOSED FORMATS, DIFFERENT SOFTWARE

The following day, Alice sends her report to Albert. He has a different software program, which refuses to open the document. Albert has no other choice than to acquire the Carcera software used by Alice, with the hope it is compatible with its computer.



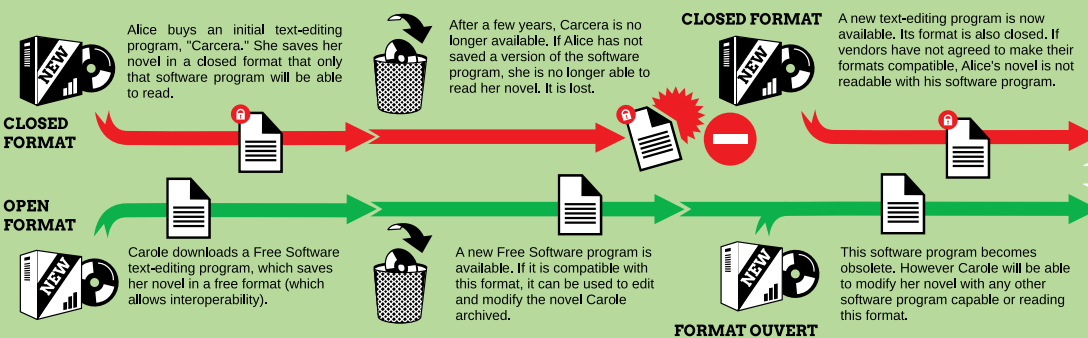
PROGRAMS WITH OPEN FORMATS, DIFFERENT SOFTWARE

Carole, another user, chooses to record her report in open format (allowing for interoperability) and sends it to David. David can read the document, modify and record it, either by using the same open format software or by using another interoperable software program.

So that your documents might be read more easily by other people, without you having to worry about which software they use, choose open formats.

▶ To ensure the longevity of my documents

Alice and Carole use text editors to write, save, and preserve a novel.



The availability and longevity of your documents, saved in a closed format, depends on the decisions of software vendors.

In your interest, choose software programs that save your documents in open formats. They are not dependent on any particular software program.

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